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CONQUEST OF SELF



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M. K. GANDHI

(Being Gleanings from His Writings and Speeches)

Compiled by
R. K. PRABHU & U. R. RAO

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THACKER & CO., LTD.
BOMBAY

FIRST PUBLISHED AUGUST 1943

SET AND PRINTED IN INDIA BY
C. MURPHY FOR THACKER & COMPANY, LIMITED, AT
THACKER'S PRESS, ESPLANADE ROAD, BOMBAY,
AND PUBLISHED BY C. MURPHY, FOR
THACKER & CO., LTD., RAMPART ROW, BOMBAY.

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INTRODUCTION

THAT human society is a ceaseless growth, an unfoldment in terms of spirituality ;

That bestiality is as far removed from manhood as matter from spirit ;

That though there is nothing to be ashamed of in the sex-urge, it is meant only for the act of creation ;

That while absolute Brahmacharya, or control of all the senses at all times and at all places in thought, word and deed, is a consummation devoutedly to be wished, if one dare not think of it, one might marry by all means, but even then one must live a life of self-restraint ;

That marriage must be considered as a sacrament imposing discipline upon the partners, restricting them to the physical union only among themselves and for the purpose only of procreation when both the partners desire and are prepared for it ;

That the observance of the Law of Continence is impossible without a living faith in God which is living Truth ;

That woman must cease to consider herself the object of man's lust or plaything if she has to fulfil her destiny ;

That self-control is the surest and the only method of regulating the birth-rate and birth-control by contraceptives is both immoral and suicidal ;

And that a large part of the miseries of today can be avoided if we look at the relations between the sexes in a healthy and pure light and regard ourselves as the trustees for the moral welfare of the future generations—such are the central teachings of the Gospel of Brahmacharya which Mahatma Gandhi has expounded during the past four decades from countless platforms and in his numerous contributions to the pages of his *Indian Opinion, Young India, Navajivan* and *Harijan*. An attempt has been made in the present work to collate and co-ordinate as many passages as could be garnered from his writings and speeches bearing on the subject of the relations of the sexes and to present them in a single handy volume so as to enable the world dispassionately to study the teachings of one of the master-minds of the age.

Even a cursory glance through any single chapter of this work will show to the reader that Gandhiji holds radical views on most of the subjects dealt with by him and that not infrequently some of these views constitute a direct challenge to those professed in so-called "enlightened" and "progressive" society. But, they are expressed with such an entire absence of dogmatism and with such compelling appeal to reason that it will be difficult to brush them aside as being obsolete or obscurantist. It is our earnest hope as the compilers

that this work will help to spread the teachings of the Saint of Sabarmati and Sevagram and to promote among the younger generation of today a healthy outlook on the relations between the sexes.

In compiling this work we have drawn freely not only on the volumes of *Young India* and *Harijan* but also on the publications of Messrs. Natesan and Co., Madras, and S. Ganesan, Madras, containing the writings and speeches of Gandhiji. To these publishers our sincere thanks are due. We are, in particular, grateful to the Navajivan Trust, who hold the copyright of Gandhiji's writings, for permission to reprint passages from *Young India*, *Harijan* and *Navajivan*. Ungrudging assistance has been rendered to us in our work by a number of friends, among whom special mention should be made of Rao Saheb D. A. Telang, B. N. Motiwalla, and K. N. Gopalier. We are also grateful to Prof. Satish D. Kalelkar of the Benares Hindu University for kindly permitting us to reproduce in this work the photograph showing Gandhiji giving his blessings to the infant daughter of Prof. Kalelkar and Mrs. Chanduben Kalelkar.

Bombay,
August 1943.

R. K. P.
U. R. R.

Part I

BRAHMACHARYA

I. WHAT IS BRAHMACHARYA ?

Absolute renunciation, absolute brahmacharya is the ideal state. If you dare not think of it marry by all means, but even then live a life of self-control.—M. K. G.

IT is not easy to write on this subject. But my own experience being fairly extensive I am always desirous of placing some of its results before the reader. Some letters which I have received have reinforced this desire.

A correspondent asks :

> "What is Brahmacharya ? Is it possible to observe it in its perfection ? If yes, have you attained that state ?"

Brahmacharya properly and fully understood means search after Brahma. As Brahma is present in every one of us, we must seek for it within with the help of meditation and consequent realisation. Realisation is impossible without complete control of all the senses. Therefore Brahmacharya signifies control of all the senses at all times and at all places in thought, word and deed.

Perfect Brahmacharis, men or women, are perfectly sinless. They are therefore near to God. They are like God.

I have no doubt that such perfect observance of Brahmacharya is possible. I regret to say that I have not attained such perfection, although my effort in that direction is ceaseless and I have not given up hope of attaining it in this very life.

I am on my guard when awake. I have acquired control over the body. I am also fairly restrained in speech. But as regards thoughts there still remains much for me to do. When I wish to concentrate my thoughts upon a particular subject, I am disturbed by other thoughts too and thus there is a conflict between them. Yet during waking hours I am able to prevent their collision. I may be said to have reached a state where I am free from unclean thoughts. But I cannot exercise an equal control over my thoughts in sleep. In sleep all manner of thoughts enter my mind, and I also dream unexpected dreams. Sometimes there arises a craving for pleasures previously enjoyed. When these cravings are impure there are bad dreams. This condition implies sinful life.

My thoughts of sin are scotched but not killed. If I had acquired perfect mastery over my thoughts, I should not have suffered from pleurisy, dysentery and appendicitis as I have during the last ten years. I believe that when the soul is sinless, the body which she inhabits is healthy too. That is to say, as the soul progresses towards freedom from sin, the body also tends to become immune from disease. But a healthy body in this case does not mean a strong body. A powerful soul lives only in a weak body. As the soul advances in strength the body languishes. A perfectly healthy body might yet be quite emaciated. A strong body is often diseased. Even if there be no disease, such a body catches infection soon, while a perfectly healthy body enjoys complete immunity from it. Pure blood

has the power of expelling all obnoxious germs.

This wonderful state is indeed difficult to reach. Or else I should have reached it already, for I am confident that I have not been indifferent in adopting every single measure conducing to that end. There is no external thing which can keep me from my goal, but it is not given us easily to wipe out the impressions left by past actions. I am not at all despondent in spite of this delay, for I can conceive the state of perfect freedom from sin, I can even catch a faint glimpse of it. And the progress I have made gives ground for hope, not for despair. Even if I die without realising my aspiration I shall not believe that I am defeated. For I believe in a future life as strongly as I do in the present. And so I know that the least possible effort is not wasted.

I have entered into these autobiographical details in order that my correspondents and others in a like condition might feel encouraged and cultivate self-confidence. *Atma* is the same in every one of us. All souls possess equal potentialities ; only some have developed their powers while others have them in a dormant condition. These latter too will have a like experience if only they try.

Thus far I have dealt with Brahmacharya in its wider significance. Brahmacharya in the popular or current acceptance of the term means control of animal passion in thought, word and deed. This meaning is also correct as the control of passion has been held to be very difficult. The same stress has not been laid upon the control of the palate, and hence the control of passion

has grown more difficult and almost impossible. Medical men believe that passion is stronger in a body worn out by disease, and therefore Brahmacharya appears hard to our enervated people.

I have spoken above of a weak but healthy body. Let no one therefore run away with the idea that we should neglect physical culture. I have expounded the highest form of Brahmacharya in my broken language which may perhaps be misunderstood. One who wishes to attain perfect control of all the senses must be prepared in the end to welcome weakness of body. All desire for bodily strength vanishes when there is no longer any attachment for the body.

But the body of a Brahmachari who has conquered animal passion must be very strong and full of lustre. Even this restricted Brahmacharya is a wonderful thing. One who is free from carnal thoughts even in his dreams is worthy of the world's adoration. It is clear that control of the other senses is an easy thing for him.

Another friend writes :

> "My condition is pitiable. The same vicious thoughts disturb me day and night, in the office, on the road, when I am reading or working or even praying. How am I to control my thoughts ? How can I look upon womankind as upon my own mother ? How can nothing but the purest affection emanate from the eyes ? How can I eradicate wicked thoughts ? I have your article on Brahmacharaya before me, but it seems I cannot profit by it at all."

This is indeed heart-rending. Many of us are in a like predicament. But so long as the mind is up against

wicked thoughts there is no reason to get disheartened. The eyes should be closed and the ears stopped with cotton if they are sinning. It is a good practice to walk with the eyes cast downwards so that there is no occasion for them to wander in other directions. One should flee from the place where unclean talk is going on or where unclean music is being sung.

Control should be acquired over the organ of taste. My experience is that one who has not mastered taste cannot control animal passion either. It is no easy task to conquer the palate. But conquest of passion is bound up with the conquest of the palate. One of the means of controlling taste is to give up spices and condiments altogether or as far as possible. Another and a more effective means is always to cultivate a feeling that we eat just in order to sustain the body and never for taste. We take in air not for taste but for life. Just as we take water to quench our thirst, in the same way should we take food only to satisfy hunger. Unfortunately parents make us contract a contrary habit from very childhood. They corrupt us by giving us all manner of delicacies not for our sustenance but out of mistaken affection. We have got to fight against this unfavourable home atmosphere.

But our most powerful ally in conquering animal passion is *Ramanama* or some similar *mantra*. The *Dwadasha mantra* will also serve the same purpose. One may repeat any *mantra* one pleases. I have suggested *Ramanama* as I have been familiar with it since childhood and as it is my constant support in my struggles.

One must be completely absorbed in whatever *mantra* one selects. One should not mind if other thoughts disturb one during the *japa*. I am confident that one who still goes on with the *japa* in faith will conquer in the end. The *mantra* becomes one's staff of life and carries one through every ordeal. One should not seek worldly profit for such sacred *mantras*. The characteristic power of these *mantras* lies in their standing guard over personal purity, and every diligent seeker will realise this at once. It should, however, be remembered that the *mantra* is not to be repeated parrot-like. One should pour one's soul into it. The parrot repeats such *mantras* mechanically, we must repeat them intelligently in the hope of driving out undesirable thoughts and with full faith in the power of the *mantras* to assist us to do so.—Translation by Valji Govindji Desai of an article in *Navajivan*, 25th May, 1924.

II. IN CONFIDENCE

I do not believe in a brahmacharya which ever required a wall of protection against the touch of the opposite sex and will fail if exposed to the least temptation.—M. K. G.

The word in Sanskrit corresponding to celibacy is Brahmacharya, and the latter means much more than celibacy. Brahmacharya means perfect control over all the senses and organs. For the perfect Brahmachari nothing is impossible. But it is an ideal state which is rarely realised. It is almost like Euclid's line which exists only in imagination, never capable of being physically drawn. It is nevertheless an important definition in geometry yielding great result. So may a perfect Brahmachari exist only in imagination. But if we did not keep him constantly before our mind's eye, we should be like a rudderless ship. The nearer the approach to the imaginary state, the greater the perfection.

But for the time being, I propose to confine myself to Brahmacharya as in the sense of celibacy. I hold that a life of perfect continence in thought, speech and action is necessary for reaching spiritual perfection. And the nation that does not possess such men is the poorer for the want. But my purpose is to plead for Brahmacharya as a temporary necessity in the present stage of national evolution.

We have more than an ordinary share of disease, famines and pauperism—even starvation among millions

...We only multiply slaves and weaklings, if we continue the process of procreation whilst we feel and remain helpless, diseased and famine-stricken. Not till India has become a free nation, able to withstand avoidable starvation, well able to feed herself in times of famine, possessing the knowledge to deal with malaria, cholera, influenza and other epidemics, have we the right to bring forth progeny. I must not conceal from the reader the sorrow I feel when I hear of births in this land. I must confess that for years I have contemplated with satisfaction the prospect of suspending procreation by voluntary self-denial. India is today ill-equipped for taking care even of her present population, not because she is over-populated, but because she is forced to foreign domination whose creed is progressive exploitation of her resources.

How is the suspension of procreation to be brought about ? Not by immoral and artificial checks that are resorted to in Europe, but by a life of discipline and self-control. Parents must teach their children the practice of Brahmacharya. According to the Hindu Shastras the lowest age at which boys may marry is twenty-five. If the mothers of India could be inclined to believe that it is sinful to train boys and girls for a married life, half the marriages of India will automatically stop. Nor need we believe the fetish of early puberty among girls because of our hot climate. I have never known a grosser superstition than this of early puberty. I make bold to say that the climate has absolutely nothing to do with puberty. What does bring about

untimely puberty is the mental and moral atmosphere surrounding our family life. Mothers and other relations make it a religious duty to teach innocent children that they are to be married when they reach a particular age. They are betrothed when they are infants, or even babes in arms. The dress and the food of the children are also aids to stimulating passions. We dress our children like dolls, not for their but for our pleasure and vanity. I have brought up children by the score. And they have without difficulty taken to and delighted in any dress given to them. We provide them with all kinds of heating and stimulating foods. Our blind love takes no note of their capacity. The result undoubtedly is an early adolescence, immature progeny and an early grave. Parents furnish an object lesson which the children easily grasp. By reckless indulgence in their passions they serve for their children as models of unrestrained licence. Every untimely addition to the family is ushered in amid trumpets of joy and feasting. The wonder is that we are not less restrained than we are, notwithstanding our surroundings. I have not a shadow of a doubt that married people, if they wished well to the country and wanted to see India become a nation of strong and handsome full-formed men and women, would practise perfect self-restraint and cease to procreate for the time being. I tender this advice even to the newly married. It is easier not to do a thing at all than to cease doing it, even as it is easier for a life abstainer to remain teetotaller than for a drunkard or even a temperate man to abstain. To remain erect is infinitely easier than to rise from a fall.

It is wrong to say that continence can be safely preached only to the satiated. There is hardly any meaning, either, in preaching continence to an enfeebled person. And my point is that whether we are young or old, satiated or not, it is our duty at the present moment to suspend bringing forth heirs to our slavery.

May I point out to parents that they ought not to fall into the argumentative trap of the rights of partners ? Consent is required for indulgence, never for restraint ; this is an obvious truth.

* * *

I now place before the reader a few simple rules which are based on the experience not only of myself, but of many of my associates :

1. Boys and girls should be brought up simply and naturally in the full belief that they are and can remain innocent.

2. All should abstain from heating and stimulating foods, condiments such as chillies, fatty and concentrated foods such as fritters, sweets and fried substances.

3. Husband and wife should occupy separate rooms and avoid privacy.

4. Both body and mind should be constantly and healthily occupied.

5. Early to bed and early to rise should be strictly observed.

6. All unclean literature should be avoided. The antidote for unclean thoughts is clean thoughts.

7. Theatres, cinemas, etc., which tend to stimulate passion, should be shunned.

8. Nocturnal dreams need not cause any anxiety. A cold bath every time for a fairly strong person is the finest preventive in such cases. It is wrong to say that an occasional indulgence is a safeguard against involuntary dreams.

9. Above all, one must not consider continence even as between husband and wife to be so difficult as to be practically impossible. On the contrary, self-restraint must be considered to be the ordinary and natural practice of life.

10. A heart-felt prayer every day for purity makes one progressively pure.—*Y.I.* 13-10-1920.

III. ABOLISH MARRIAGE!

A large part of the miseries of today can be avoided, if we look at the relations between the sexes in a healthy and pure light, and regard ourselves as trustees for the moral welfare of the future generations.—M. K. G.

A correspondent, whom I know well, raises an issue, I take it for purely academic interest, because I know the views he has set forth are not his. "Is not our present day morality unnatural?" he asks. "If it was natural, it should have been the same everywhere in all ages, but every race and community seems to have its own peculiar marriage laws, and in enforcing them men have made themselves worse than beasts. For diseases which are unknown amongst animals are quite common amongst men; infanticide, abortions, child-marriages, which are impossible in the brute creation, are the curse of the society that holds up marriage as a sacrament, and no end of evil results have sprung from what we uphold as laws of morality. And the miserable condition of Hindu widows—what is it due to, but to the existing marriage laws? Why not go back to nature, and take a leaf out of the book of the brute creation?"

I do not know whether the advocates of free love in the West resort to the argument summarised above or have any stronger reasons to put forth, but I am sure that the tendency to regard the marriage bond as barbarous is distinctly Western. If the argument is

also borrowed from the West, there is no difficulty about meeting it.

It is a mistake to institute a comparison between man and the brute, and it is this comparison that vitiates the whole argument. For man is higher than the brute in his moral instincts and moral institutions. The law of nature as applied to the one is different from the law of nature as applied to the other. Man has reason, discrimination, and free will such as it is. The brute has no such thing. It is not a free agent, and knows no distinction between virtue and vice, good and evil. Man, being a free agent, knows these distinctions, and when he follows his higher nature, shows himself far superior to the brute, but when he follows his baser nature, can show himself lower than the brute. Even the races regarded as the most uncivilised on earth accept some restriction on sexual relations. If it be said that the restriction is itself barbarous, then freedom from all restraints should be the law of man. If all men were to act according to this lawless law, there would be perfect chaos within twenty-four hours. Man being by nature more passionate than the brute, the moment all restraint was withdrawn, the lava of unbridled passion would overspread the whole earth and destroy mankind. Man is superior to the brute inasmuch as he is capable of self-restraint and sacrifice, of which the brute is incapable.

Some of the diseases that are so common at the present day are the result of infringement of marriage laws. I should like to know a single instance of a man strictly observing the restraint of the marriage bond

having suffered from the diseases the correspondent has in mind. Infanticide, child marriages and the like are also the result of the breach of marriage laws. For the law lays down that a man or woman shall choose a mate only when he or she has come of age, is healthy, and capable of restraint, and desires to have progeny. Those, who strictly obey this law and regard the marriage bond as a sacrament, have never an occasion to be unhappy or miserable. Where marriage is a sacrament, the union is not the union of bodies but the union of souls indissoluble even by the death of either party. Where there is a true union of souls, the re-marriage of a widow or widower is unthinkable, improper and wrong. Marriages, where the true law of marriage is ignored, do not deserve the name. If we have very few true marriages now-a-days, it is not the institution of marriage that is to blame, but the prevailing form of it, which should be reformed.

The correspondent contends that marriage is no moral or religious bond but a custom, and a custom which is opposed to religion and morality, and hence deserves to be absolished. I submit that marriage is a fence that protects religion. If the fence were to be destroyed, religion would go to pieces. The foundation of religion is restraint, and marriage is nothing but restraint. The man who knows no restraint has no hope of self-realisation. I confess it may be difficult to prove the necessity of restraint to an atheist or a materialist. But he, who knows the perishable nature of flesh from the imperishable nature of the spirit, instinctively knows that self-realisation is impossible without self-discipline

and self-restraint. The body may either be a playground of passion, or a temple of self-realisation. If it is the latter, there is no room there for libertinism. The spirit needs must curb the flesh every moment.

Woman will be the apple of discord where the marriage bond is loose, where there is no observance of the law of restraint. If men were as unrestricted as the brutes they would straightway take the road to destruction. I am firmly of opinion that all the evils that the correspondent complains of can be eradicated not by abolishing marriage but by a systematic understanding and observance of the law of marriage.

I agree that whereas amongst some communities marriage is permitted amongst very near relations, it is prohibited among other communities, that whereas some communities forbid polygamy some permit it. Whilst one would wish that there was a uniform moral law accepted by all communities, the diversity does not point to the necessity of abolishing all restraint. As we grow wise in experience, our morality will gain in uniformity. Even today the moral sense of the world holds up monogamy as the highest ideal, and no religion makes polygamy obligatory. The ideal remains unaffected by the relaxation of practice according to time and place.

I need not reiterate my views regarding re-marriage of widows, as I consider re-marriage of virgin widows not only desirable but the bounden duty of all parents who happen to have such widowed daughters.—*Y.I.* 3-6-1926.

IV. WHAT IS NATURAL?

If we begin to believe that indulgence in animal passion is necessary, harmless and sinless, we shall want to give reins to it and shall be powerless to resist it. Whereas if we educate ourselves to believe that such indulgence is harmful, sinful, unnecessary, and can be controlled, we shall discover that self-restraint is perfectly possible.

—M. K. G.

No word seems to be more abused today than the word 'natural.' For instance, a correspondent writes, 'as eating and drinking are natural to man, even so is anger.' Another seems to argue: 'The sexual function is as natural as the other functions of the body. Were not so, God would not have endowed it to man. If it was not our duty to curse the wicked and to bless the good, why should we have been endowed with the faculty of cursing and blessing? May it not be our duty to develop all our faculties to perfection?...In short virtue and vice are figments of the imagination...'

This is not one man's argument, I have boiled down and put together the arguments of many...Indeed if we were to put man in the same category as the brute, many things could be proved to come under the description 'natural.' But if they belong to two different species, not every thing that is natural to the brute is natural to man. 'Progress is man's distinction, man's alone, not beast's.' Man has discrimination and reason.

Man does not live by bread alone, as the brute does. He uses his reason to worship God and to know Him and regards the attainment of that knowledge as the *summum bonum* of life. The brute, if he can be said to worship God, does so involuntarily.

The desire to worship God is inconceivable in the brute, while man can voluntarily worship even Satan. It must, therefore, be, and is, man's nature to know and find God. When he worships Satan he acts contrary to his nature. Of course, I will not carry conviction to one who makes no distinction between man and the brute. To him virtue and vice are convertible terms. While to the man whose end and aim is realisation of God, even the functions of eating and drinking can be natural only within certain limits. For having knowledge of God as his end, he will not eat or drink for the sake of enjoyment, but solely for sustaining the body.

Restraint and renunciation will, therefore, always be his watchwords even in respect of these functions. And if it is man's nature to know and find God, sexual indulgence should be contrary to his nature and complete renunciation of it will accord best with his mission. For realisation of God is impossible without complete renunciation of the sexual desire. It is not man's duty to develop *all* his faculties to perfection ; his duty is to develop all his God-ward faculties to perfection and to suppress completely those of a contrary tendency.

Any one blessed with desire or free will to accept and reject, cannot but distinguish between good and evil, virtue and vice. For these mean in other words

nothing but things to be accepted and things to be rejected. Thus robbing some one of his property is a thing to be rejected, hence bad or sinful. We have within us both good and bad desires. It is our duty to cultivate the former and suppress or eradicate the latter, and if we fail therein we should remain brutes though born men. Birth as a human being is therefore declared by all religions as a rare privilege—a state of probation. And Hinduism says that if we are weighed and found wanting we should have to be re-born as beasts.

—*Y.I.* 24-6-1926.

* * *

Need for Restraint

All our principles arise out of the main one—Truth. How can one who attempts to realise Truth worship sensual passions ? We know of no one who has realised Truth by leading a sensual life. Non-violence, again, cannot be observed without observing Brahmacharya. Non-violence is universal love. When a man profers all his love to a woman or a woman to a man what can remain with him or her for others ? Neither of them can look upon the whole world as his or her family. They have already a world of their own. This is a great obstacle in practising universal love. Hence a devotee of non-violence cannot get married, needless to even mention promiscuous relationship outside the marriage tie. Cannot a married man then ever realise Truth ? The married should remain like the unmarried. They should be like brothers and sisters free from all sensual desires. Regarding all women as mothers, sisters,

daughters is in itself elevating. It liberates us from a bondage. It widens the family and love grows after wiping out the sensual element. Selfishness vanishes and there is little room for mutual conflicts.

The influence on the mind is the primary object of Brahmacharya and conservation of physical energy is secondary. What folly it is to lose vital energy for sensual pleasure instead of conserving it for building up our bodies. Brahmacharya is to be observed in mind, speech and body. One who controls the body but indulges or harbours sensual feelings mentally is a hypocrite. The body follows the mind. We have to control the mind and we are sure to win in the end. Brahmacharya is not merely a restraint over sexual desires. It has to be much broader and has to comprise all sensual pleasures—hearing words inciting passion, seeing exciting sights, tasting stimulating things, and touching thrilling objects. A Brahmachari curbs not only his sex but also all his senses. A great deal of harm is done by a narrow application of Brahmacharya. Brahmacharya means penance after the realisation of Brahma as Truth. From this springs the special interpretation of 'restraint of all senses.' The incomplete application to sensual function should be forgotten.

—*Y.I.* 14-8-1930.

V. CONSERVATION OF VITAL ENERGY

Once the idea that the only and grand function of the sexual organ is generation, possesses man and woman, union for any other purpose they will hold as criminal waste of the vital fluid and consequent excitement caused to man and woman as an equally criminal waste of energy.

—M. K. G.

A Malabar correspondent writes :

"In your review of Monsieur Bureau's book it is stated that there is no case on record of celibacy or long abstention producing any evil effects on us. In my own case, however, three weeks seem to be the utmost limit of beneficial abstention. At the end of that period I usually feel a heaviness of body, a restlessness both of body and mind, leading to bad temper. Relief is obtained either by normal coitus or nature herself coming to the rescue by an involuntary discharge. Far from feeling weak or nervous, I become the next morning calm and light, and am able to proceed to my work with added gusto.

"A friend of mine, however, developed distinctly injurious symptoms by abstention. He is about thirty-two years of age, a strict vegetarian and a very religious person. He is absolutely free from any vicious habits of body or mind. Yet he was having till two years ago, when he married, copious discharges at night followed by weakness of body and depression of spirits. Lately he developed excruciating pain in the abdominal region. On the advice of an Ayurvedic doctor he married and is now cured.

> "I am intellectually convinced of the superiority of celibacy on which all our ancient Shastras agree. But the experiences I have quoted above make it clear that we are not able to absorb in our system the highly vital secretion of the testes, which consequently becomes a toxic product. I humbly request you, therefore, to publish in *Young India*, for the benefit of people like me who have no doubt as to the importance of chastity and abstention, any device, such as the *asanas* of *Hathayoga*, which will enable us to assimilate and absorb the vital product in our system."

The instances quoted by the correspondent are typical. In several such cases I have observed hasty generalisations from insufficient data. Ability to retain and assimilate the vital fluid is a matter of long training. It must be so, as it gives a strength to body and mind such as no other process does with equal effect. Drugs and mechanical contrivances may keep the body in a tolerable condition, but they sap the mind and make it too weak to resist the play of a multitude of passions which like so many deadly foes surround every human being.

Too often do we expect results in spite of practices which are calculated to retard, if not to defeat them. The common mode of life is shaped to minister to our passions. Our food, our literature, our amusements, our business hours are all regulated so as to excite and feed our animal passions. The vast majority of us want to marry, to have children and generally to enjoy ourselves, be it ever so moderately. It will be so more or less to the end of time.

But there are, as there always have been, exceptions to the general rule. Men have wanted to live a life wholly dedicated to the service of humanity, which is the same thing as saying to God. They will not divide their time between the rearing of a special family and the tending of the general human family. Necessarily such men and women cannot afford to live the general life which is designed to promote the special, individual interest. Those who will be celibates for the sake of God need to renounce the laxities of life, and find their enjoyment in its austere rigours. They may be 'in the world' but not 'of it.' Their food, their business, their hours of business, their recreations, their literature, their outlook upon life must therefore be different from the general.

It is now time to inquire whether the correspondent and his friend *desired* to live the life of complete abstention and whether they modelled it accordingly. If not, it is not difficult to understand the relief that the relaxation brought in the first case and the weakness that supervened in the second case. Marriage no doubt was the remedy in that second case, as in the vast majority of cases marriage is the most natural and desirable state when one finds oneself even against one's will living the married life in one's daily thought. The potency of thought unsuppressed but unembodied is far greater than that of thought embodied that is translated into action. And when the action is brought under due control, it reacts upon and regulates the thought itself. Thought thus translated into action becomes a prisoner and is

brought under subjection. Thus considered, marriage too is a mode of restraint.

I must not undertake in the course of a newspaper article to give detailed instructions for the guidance of those who desire to live a life of ordered restraint. I must refer them to my booklet on health written years ago with that end in view. It does need revision in certain parts in the light of fresh experiences, but there is nothing in the book which I would withdraw. General directions, however, may be safely reiterated here :

1. Eat moderately, always leaving the dining room with a feeling of pleasant hunger.

2. Highly spiced and fatty vegetarian foods must be avoided. Separate fat is wholly unnecessary when an adequate supply of milk is available. Little food suffices when there is little vital waste.

3. Both the body and the mind must be constantly occupied in clean pursuits.

4. Early to bed and early to rise is a necessity.

5. Above all a life of restraint presupposes an intense living desire for reunion with God. When there is heart perception of this central fact, there will be continuously increasing reliance upon God to keep His instrument pure and in order. The Gita says : 'Passions return again and again in spite of fasting, but even the desire ceases when the Divine is seen.' This is literally true.

The correspondent refers to *asanas* and *pranayama*. I believe that they have an important place in the practice of restraint. But my own experiences in this

direction, I am sorry to say, are not worth recording. There is, to my knowledge, little literature on the subject that is based on present experience. But it is a field worthy of exploration. I would, however, warn the inexperienced reader from trying it or accepting the directions of the next *hathayogi* he may meet with. Let him be sure that an abstemious and godly life is wholly sufficient to achieve the much to be desired restraint.

—*Y.I.* 2-9-1926.

VI. SELF- RESTRAINT *VS.* SELF-INDULGENCE

Restraint self-imposed is no compulsion. A man, who chooses the path of freedom from restraint, i.e., of self-indulgence, will be a bondslave of passions, whilst the man who binds himself to rules and restraints releases himself. All things in the universe, including the sun and the moon and the stars, obey certain laws. Without the restraining influence of these laws the world would not go on for a single moment.—M. K. G.

Mind takes a rope to be a snake, and the man with that mentality turns pale and runs away, or takes up a stick to belabour the fancied snake. Another mistakes a sister for wife and has animal passion rising in his breast. The passion subsides the moment he discovers his mistake...No doubt, whilst 'abstinence is practised under the false idea that the instinct is but a low pleasure,' it is likely 'to produce irritability and the weakening of love.' But if abstinence is practised with the desire to strengthen the bond of love, to purify it and to conserve the vital energy for a better purpose, instead of promoting irritability it will promote equanimity, and instead of loosening the bond of affection strengthen it. Love based upon indulgence of animal passion is at best a selfish affair and likely to snap under the slightest strain. And why should the sexual act be a sacrament in the human species, if it is not that among the lower animals ? Why should we not look at it as what it is in reality, i e.,

a simple act of procreation to which we are helplessly drawn for the perpetuation of the species ? Only a man, having been gifted with a free will to a limited extent, exercises the human prerogative of self-denial for the sake of the nobler purpose to which he is born than his brother animals. It is the force of habit which makes us think the sexual act to be necessary and desirable for the promotion of love, apart from procreation, in spite of innumerable experiences to the contrary that it does not deepen love, that it is in no way necessary for its retention or enrichment. Indeed instances can be quoted in which that bond has grown stronger with abstinence. No doubt abstinence must be a voluntary act undertaken for mutual moral advancement.

Human society is a ceaseless growth, an unfoldment in terms of spirituality. If so, it must be based on ever increasing restraint upon the demands of the flesh. Thus marriage must be considered to be a sacrament imposing discipline upon the partners, restricting them to the physical union only among themselves and for the purpose only of procreation when both the partners desire and are prepared for it.

There is an end to all argument if we start, as my correspondent has started, with the premise that sexual act is a necessity outside of the purpose of procreation. The premise is vitiated in the presence of authentic instances that can be cited of complete abstinence having been practised by some of the highest among mankind in all climes. It is no argument against the possibility or desirability of abstinence to say that it is difficult for

the vast majority of mankind. What was not possible for the vast majority a hundred years ago has been found possible today. And what is a hundred years in the cycle of time open to us for making infinite progress? If scientists are right, it was but yesterday that we found ourselves endowed with the human body. Who knows, who dare prescribe, its limitation? Indeed every day we are discovering the infiniteness of its capacity for good as well as evil.

If the possibility and desirability of abstinence be admitted, we must find out and devise the means of attaining it. And as I have said in a previous article, life must be remodelled, if we are to live under restraint and discipline. We may not, as the vulgar saying goes, eat the cake and have it too. If we impose restraint upon the organs of procreation, we must impose it upon all the others. If the eye and the ear and the nose and the tongue, the hands and the feet are let loose, it is impossible to keep the primary organ under check. Most cases of irritability, hysteria, and even insanity which are wrongly ascribed to attempts at continence will in truth be found traceable to the incontinence of the other senses. No sin, no breach of nature's laws, goes unpunished.

I must not quarrel about words. If self-control be an interference with nature precisely in the same sense as contraceptives, be it so. I would still maintain that the one interference is lawful and desirable because it promotes the well-being of the individuals as well as society, whereas the other degrades both and is therefore

unlawful. Self-control is the surest and the only method of regulating the birth-rate. Birth control by contraceptives is race suicide. —*Y.I.* 16-9-1926.

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Joy in the Battle.

All the evidence in my possession goes to show that it is man who lacks the power of self-restraint more than woman. But there is no need for belittling his own inability to exercise restraint. He must manfully face the prospect of a large family and discover the best means of supporting them. He must know that against the millions who are strangers to the use of contraceptives, there are possibly a few thousand who use them. The millions are in no dread of having to breed their children though the latter may not all be wanted. I suggest that it is cowardly to refuse to face the consequences of one's acts. Persons who use contraceptives will never learn the virtue of self-restraint. They will not need it. Self-indulgence with contraceptives may prevent the coming of children but will sap the vitality of both men and women—perhaps more of men than of women. It is unmanly to refuse battle with the devil. Let my correspondent resolve upon self-restraint as the only sure and honourable method of avoiding unwanted children. What though he and his fail in the effort a hundred times ? Joy is in the battle. The result comes by the grace of God.—*H.* 17-4-1937.

VII. THE NECESSITY OF CONTINENCE

I hold that a life of perfect continence in thought, speech and action is necessary for reaching spiritual perfection. And a nation that does not possess such men is the poorer for the worst.—M. K. G.

Many are the keys to health, and they are all quite essential; but one thing needful, above all others, is Brahmacharya. Pure air, pure water, and wholesome food certainly contribute to health. But how can we be healthy if we expend all the health that we acquire? How can we help being paupers if we spend all the money that we earn? There can be no doubt that men and women can never be virile or strong unless they observe true Brahmacharya.

What, then, is Brahmacharya? It means that men and women should refrain from carnal knowledge of each other. That is to say, they should not touch each other with a carnal thought, they should not think of it even in their dreams. Their mutual glances should be free from all suggestion of carnality. The hidden strength that God has given us should be conserved by rigid self-discipline, and transmitted into energy and power,—not merely of body, but also of mind and soul.

But what is the spectacle that we actually see around us? Men and women, old and young, without exception, are caught in the meshes of sensuality. Blinded for the most part by lust, they lose all sense of

right and wrong. I have myself seen even boys and girls behaving as if they were mad under its fatal influence. I too have behaved likewise under similar influences, and it could not well be otherwise. For the sake of a momentary pleasure, we sacrifice in an instant all the stock of vital energy that we have laboriously accumulated. The infatuation over, we find ourselves in a miserable condition. The next morning we feel hopelessly weak and tired, and the mind refuses to do its work. Then in order to remedy the mischief, we consume large quantities of milk, *bhasmas*, *yakutis* and what not. We take all sorts of 'nervine tonics' and place ourselves at the doctor's mercy for repairing the waste, and for recovering the capacity for enjoyment. So the days pass and years, until at length old age comes upon us, and finds us utterly emasculated in body and in mind.

But the law of Nature is just the reverse of this. The older we grow, the keener should our intellect be ; the longer we live, the greater should be our capacity to communicate the benefit of our accumulated experience to our fellow-men. And such is indeed the case with those who have been true Brahmacharis. They know no fear of death, and they do not forget God even in the hour of death ; nor do they indulge in vain desires. They die with a smile on their lips, and boldly face the day of judgment. They are true men and women ; and of them alone can it be said that they have conserved their health.

We hardly realise the fact that incontinence is the root-cause of most of the vanity, anger, fear, and jealousy

in the world. If our mind is not under our control, if we behave once or oftener every day more foolishly than even little children, what sins may we not commit consciously or unconsciously ? How can we pause to think of the consequences of our actions, however vile or sinful they may be ?

But you may ask, 'Who has ever seen a true Brahmachari in this sense ? If all men should turn Brahmacharis, would not humanity be extinct and the whole world go to rack and ruin ?' We will leave aside the religious aspect of this question and discuss it simply from the secular point of view. To my mind, these questions only betray our timidity and worse. We have not the strength of will to observe Brahmacharya, and therefore set about finding pretexts for evading our duty. The race of true Brahmacharis is by no means extinct ; but if they were commonly to be met with, of what value would Brahmacharya be ? Thousands of hardy labourers have to go and dig deep into the bowels of the earth in search of diamonds, and at length they get perhaps merely a handful of them out of heaps and heaps of rock. How much greater, then, should be the labour involved in the discovery of the infinitely more precious diamond of a Brahmachari ? If the observance of Brahmacharya should mean the end of the world, that is none of our business. Are we God that we should be so anxious about its future ? He who created it will surely see to its preservation. We need not trouble to enquire whether other people practise Brahmacharya or not. When we enter a trade or profession, do we ever

pause to consider what the fate of the world would be if all men were to do likewise ? The true Brahmachari will, in the long run, discover for himself answers to such questions.

But how can men engrossed in the cares of the material world put these ideas into practice ? What about those who are married ? What shall they do who have children ? And what shall be done by those people who cannot control themselves ? We have already seen what is the highest state for us to attain. We should keep this ideal constantly before us, and try to approach it to the utmost of our capacity. When little children are taught to write the letters of the alphabet, we show them the perfect shapes of the letters, and they try to reproduce them as best they can. In the same way, if we steadily work up to the ideal of Brahmacharya we may ultimately succeed in realising it. What if we have married already ? The law of Nature is that Brahmacharya may be broken only when the husband and wife feel a desire for progeny. Those, who, remembering this law, violate Brahmacharya once in four or five years, will not become slaves to lust, nor lose much of their stock of vital energy. But alas how rare are those men and women who yield to the sexual craving merely for the sake of offspring ! The vast majority turn to sexual enjoyment merely to satisfy their carnal passion, with the result that children are born to them quite against their will. In the madness of sexual passion, they give no thought to the consequences of their acts. In this respect, men are even more to blame than women. The

man is blinded so much by his lust that he never cares to remember that his wife is weak and unable to bear or rear up a child. In the West, indeed, people have transgressed all bounds. They indulge in sexual pleasures, and devise measures in order to evade the responsibilities of parenthood. Many books have been written on this subject, and a regular trade is being carried on in contraceptives. We are as yet free from this sin, but we do not shrink from imposing the heavy burden of maternity on our women, and we are not concerned even to find that our children ar weak, impotent and imbecile. Every time we get a child, we offer thanksgiving prayers to God and so seek to hide from ourselves the wickedness of our acts. Should we not rather deem it a sign of the wrath of God to have children who are feeble, sensual, crippled and timid ? Is it a matter for joy that mere boys and girls should have children ? Is it not rather a curse ? We all know that the premature fruit of a too young plant weakens the parent, and so we try all means of delaying the appearance of fruit. But we sing hymns of praise and thanksgiving to God when a child is born of a boy father and a girl mother ! Could anything be more dreadful ? Do we think that the world is going to be saved by the countless swarms of such impotent children endlessly multiplying in India or elsewhere ? Verily, we are, in this respect, far worse than even the lower animals ; for in their case the male and the female are brought together solely with the object of breeding from them. Man and woman should regard it a sacred duty to keep apart from the moment of conception up to

the time when the child is weaned. But we go on with our fatal merry-making blissfully forgetful of that sacred obligation. This almost incurable disease enfeebles our mind and leads us to an early grave, after making us drag a miserable existence for a short while. Married people should understand the true function of marriage, and should not violate Brahmacharya except with a view to progeny.

But this is so difficult under our present conditions of life. Our diet, our ways of life, our common talk, and our environments are all equally calculated to rouse animal passions ; and sensuality is like a poison eating into our vitals. Some people may doubt the possibility of our being able to free ourselves from this bondage. This book is written not for those who go about with such doubting of heart, but only for those who are really in earnest, and who have the courage to take active steps for self-improvement. Those who are quite content with their present abject condition will find this tedious even to read ; but I hope it will be of some service to those who have realised and are disgusted with their own miserable plight.

From all that has been said, it follows that those who are still unmarried should try to remain so ; but if they cannot help marrying, they should defer it as long as possible. Young men, for instance, should take a vow to remain unmarried till the age of twenty-five or thirty. We cannot consider here all the advantages other than physical which they will reap and which are as it were added unto the rest.

My request to those parents who read this chapter is that they should not tie a mill-stone round the necks of their children by marrying them young. They should look to the welfare of the rising generation, and not merely seek to pamper their own vanity. They should cast aside all silly notions of family pride or respectability, and cease to indulge in such heartless practices. Let them rather, if they are true well-wishers of their children, look to their physical, mental and moral improvement. What greater disservice can they do to their progeny than compel them to enter upon married life, with all its tremendous responsibilities and cares, while they are mere children ?

Then again the true laws of health demand that the man who loses his wife, as well as the woman that loses her husband, should remain single ever after. There is a difference of opinion among medical men as to whether young men and women need ever let their vital energy escape, some answering the question in the affirmative, others in the negative. But while doctors thus disagree we must not give way to over-indulgence from an idea that we are supported by medical authority. I can affirm, without the slightest hesitation, from my own experience as well as that of others, that sexual enjoyment is not only not necessary for, but is positively injurious to health. All the strength of body and mind that has taken long to acquire is lost all at once by a single dissipation of the vital energy. It takes a long time to regain this lost vitality, and even then there is no saying that it can be thoroughly recovered. A broken

mirror may be mended and made to do its work, but it can never be anything but a broken mirror.

As has already been pointed out, the preservation of our vitality is impossible without pure air, pure water, pure and wholesome food, as well as pure thoughts. So vital indeed is the relation between health and morals that we can never be perfectly healthy unless we lead a clean life. The earnest man, who, forgetting the errors of the past, begins to live a life of purity, will be able to reap the fruit of its straightway. Those who practise true Brahmacharya even for a short period will see how their body and mind improve steadily in strength and power, and they will not at any cost be willing to part with this treasure. I have myself been guilty of lapses even after having fully understood the value of Brahmacharya, and have of course paid dearly for it. I am filled with shame and remorse when I think of the terrible contrast between my condition before and after these lapses. But from the errors of the past I have now learnt to preserve this treasure intact, and I fully hope, with God's grace, to continue to preserve it in the future ; for I have, in my own person, experienced the inestimable benefits of Brahmacharya. I was married early, and had become the father of children as a mere youth. When, at length, I awoke to the reality of my situation, I found that I was steeped in ignorance about the fundamental laws of our being. I shall consider myself amply rewarded for writing this chapter if at least a single reader takes a warning from my failings and experiences, and profits thereby. Many people have told me—and I

also believe it—that I am full of energy and enthusiasm, and that I am by no means weak in mind ; some even accuse me of strength bordering on obstincy. Never-the-less there is still bodily and mental ill health as a legacy of the past. And yet, when compared with my friends, I may call myself healthy and strong. If even after twenty years of sensual enjoyment, I have been able to reach this state, how much better off should I have been if I had kept myself pure during those twenty years as well ? It is my full conviction, that if only I had lived a life of unbroken Brahmacharya all through, my energy and enthusiasm would have been a thousand-fold greater and I should have been able to devote them all to the furtherance of my country's cause as my own. If an imperfect Brahmachari like myself can reap such benefit, how much more wonderful must be the gain in power,—physical, mental, as well as moral,—that unbroken Brahmacharya can bring to us !

When so strict is the law of Brahmacharya, what shall we say of those guilty of the unpardonable sin of illegitimate sexual enjoyment ? The evil arising from adultery and prostitution is a vital question of religion and morality and cannot be fully dealt with in a treatise on health. Here we are only concerned to point out how thousands who are guilty of these sins are afflicted by venereal diseases. God is merciful in this that the punishment swiftly overtakes sinners. Their short span of life is spent in abject bondage to quacks in a futile quest after a remedy for their ills. If adultery and prostitution disappeared, at least half the present number

of doctors would find their occupation gone. So inextricably indeed has venereal disease caught mankind in its clutches that thoughtful medical men have been forced to admit, that so long as adultery and prostitution continue, there is no hope for the human race, all the discoveries of curative medicine notwithstanding. The medicines for these diseases are so poisonous that although they may appear to have done some good for the time being, they give rise to other and still more terrible diseases which are transmitted from generation to generation.—Extracts from Chapter IX of Part I of Gandhiji's Gujarati work *Guide to Health*, translated into English.

VIII. SELF-CONTROL

We are like a rider who cannot keep his horse under control and is quickly brought down. But one who drawing in the reins, keeps the animal under subjection stands a fair chance of reaching destination. Even so does a man who can control his passions make for the goal. He alone is fit for "Swarajya." He alone is a seeker after truth. He alone becomes capable of knowing God.—M. K. G.

Even the observance of Brahmacharya as ordinarily understood is described in the Shastras as a hard task. This is true in the main, but I may be permitted to make a few observations which point the other way. Brahmacharya appears to be difficult because we do not control the other senses. Take for example the organ of taste which leads the rest. Brahmacharya will come easy to anyone who controls his palate. Zoologists tell us that Brahmacharya is observed by the lower animals, as for instance cattle, to a greater extent than by human beings, and this is a fact. The reason is that cattle have perfect control over the palate, not by will but by instinct. They subsist on mere fodder, and of this too, they take a quantity just sufficient for nutrition. They eat to live, do not live to eat, while our case is just the reverse. The mother pampers her child with all kinds of delicacies. She believes that she can evince her love only by feeding the child to the utmost. By doing this she does not enhance the child's enjoyment of his food,

but on the other hand makes everything insipid and disgusting for him. The taste depends upon hunger. Even sweets will not be as tasteful to one who is not hungry as a slice of dry bread is to another who is really so. We prepare food in various ways with a variety of spices in order to be able to load the stomach, and wonder when we find Brahmacharya difficult to observe.

We misuse and corrupt the eyes which God has given us and do not direct them to the right things. Why should not the mother learn *Gayatri* and teach it to the child ? She need not trouble with the inner and deeper meaning of the *mantra*. It is enough for her to understand and explain to the child that it inculcates reverence for the sun. This is but a rough interpretation of the *mantra* which I am placing before you. How shall we revere the sun ? By looking up to the sun and performing an ablution as it were of the eyes. The author of the *Gayatri* was a *Rishi*, a seer. He taught us that nowhere else can we see such a beautiful drama as is daily staged before our eyes at the time of sunrise. There is no stage-manager greater than God or more sublime, and there is no more magnificent stage than the sky. But where is the mother who washes her child's eyes and then asks him to have a look at the sky ? Mothers in our country are unfortunately concerned with quite other things. The boy may perhaps turn out to be a big official, thanks to his education at school, but we are apt to ignore the very large part which the home atmosphere plays in his education. Parents wrap their children up in heavy clothing and smother them while

they fondly imagine that they are adding to their beauty. Clothes are meant just to cover the body, protect it against heat and cold, not to beautify it. If a child is trembling with cold, we must send him to the fireside to warm himself or out into the street for a run, or into the field for work. It is only thus that we can help him to build a splendid constitution. By keeping the child confined in the house we impart a false warmth to his body. By pampering his body we only succeed in destroying it.

So much for the clothes. Then again, the light conversation carried on in the house creates a very harmful impression on the child's mind. Elders talk of getting him married. The things which he sees around him also tend to corrupt him. The wonder is that we have not sunk to the lowest depths of barbarism. Restraint is observed in spite of conditions which render it well-nigh impossible. A gracious Providence has so arranged things that man is saved in spite of himself. If we remove all these obstacles in the way of Brahmacharya, it not only becomes possible but also easy to observe.

We are thus weak and yet we have to compete with a world of men physically stronger than ourselves. There are two ways of doing this : the one godly, and the other satanic. The satanic way is to adopt all measures right or wrong for developing the body, such as beef-eating, etc. A friend of my childhood used to say that we must take meat, and that otherwise we could not develop our physique so as to meet the English on equal

terms. Beef-eating became the vogue in Japan when the time came for her to face other nations. We must follow in her wake if we wish to build our bodies in the satanic way.

But if we build up our bodies in the godly way, the only means at our disposal is Brahmacharya. I pity myself when people call me a *naishthika* Brahmachari. How could such description apply to one who, like me, is married and has children? A *naishthika* Brahmachari would never suffer from fever, headache, cough or appendicitis, as I have suffered.

Let no one therefore mistake me for a *naishthika* Brahmachari, who should be made of infinitely sterner stuff. I am not an ideal Brahmachari although I aspire to be one.

Brahmacharya does not mean that one may not touch a woman, even one's sister, in any circumstance whatsoever. But it does mean that one's state of mind should be as calm and unruffled during such contact as when one touches, say, a piece of paper. A man's Brahmacharya avails for nothing if he must hesitate in nursing his sister who is ill. He has to be as free from excitement in case of contact with the fairest damsel on earth as in contact with a dead body. If you wish your children to attain such Brahmacharya, the framing of their curriculum must not rest with you but with a Brahmachari like myself, imperfect as I am.

A Brahmachari is a *Sannyasi* by nature. *Brahmacharyashram* is superior to *Sannyasa*, but we have thoroughly degraded it, and hence the degradation of

Grihasthashram as well as *Vanaprasthashram*, and the disappearance of *Sannyasa*. Such is our sorry plight.

If we take to the satanic way I have described, we will not be able to face the Pathans even after five hundred years. But if we take to the godly way we can meet them this very day. For the change of mental attitude necessary in following the latter can take place in a moment, while building up the body to the required standard would take ages. The nation, God willing, can follow the godly way if only the parents prepare an atmosphere favourable to the observance of Brahmacharya on the part of the rising generation.—Translation by V. G. Desai of a Gujarati speech before the Seva Samaj, Bhadran, reported in *Navajivan*, 26th Feb. 1925.

IX. PURITY

Our body has been given to us on the understanding that we should render devoted service to God with its aid. It is our duty to keep it pure and unstained from within as well as without, so as to render it back to the Giver when the time comes for it, in the state of purity in which we got it.

—M. K. G.

Brahmacharya is not mere mechanical celibacy, it means complete control over all the senses and freedom from lust in thought, word and deed. As such it is the royal road to self-realisation or attainment of Brahma.

The ideal Brahmachari has not to struggle with sensual desire or desire for procreation ; it never troubles him at all. The whole world will be to him one vast family, he will centre all his ambition in relieving the misery of mankind, and the desire for procreation will be to him as gall and wormwood. He who has realised the misery of mankind in all its magnitude will never be stirred by passion. He will instinctively know the fountain of strength in him, and he will ever persevere to keep it undefiled. His humble strength will command respect of the world, and he will wield an influence greater than that of the sceptred monarch.

But I am told that this an an impossible ideal, that I do not take count of the natural attraction between man and woman. I refuse to believe that the sensual affinity, referred to here, can be at all regarded as natural ;

in that case the deluge would soon be over us. The natural affinity between man and woman is the attraction between brother and sister, mother and son, or father and daughter. It is this natural attraction that sustains the world. I should find it impossible to live, much less carry on my work, if I did not regard the whole of womankind as sisters, daughters or mothers. If I looked at them with lustful eyes, it would be the surest way to perdition.

Procreation is a natural phenomenon indeed, but within specific limits. A transgression of those limits imperils womankind, emasculates the race, induces disease, puts a premium or vice and makes the world ungodly. A man in the grip of the sensual desire is a man without moorings. If such a one were to guide society, to flood it with his writings, and men were to be swayed by them, where would society be ? And yet we have that very thing happening today. Supposing a moth whirling round a light were to record the moments of its fleeting joy and we were to imitate it, regarding it as an example, where would we be ? No, I must declare with all the power I can command that sensual attraction even between husband and wife is unnatural. Marriage is meant to cleanse the hearts of the couple of sordid passion and take them nearer to God. Lustless love between husband and wife is not impossible. Man is not a brute. He has risen to a higher state after countless births in the brute creation. He is born to stand, not to walk on all fours or crawl. Bestiality is as far removed from manhood as matter from spirit.

In conclusion I shall summarise the means to its attainment.

The first step is the realisation of its necessity.

The next is gradual control of the senses. A Brahmachari must needs control his palate. He must eat to live, and not for enjoyment. He must see only clean things and close his eyes before anything unclean. It is thus a sign of polite breeding to walk with one's eyes towards the ground and not wandering about from object to object. A Brahmachari will likewise hear nothing obscene or unclean, smell no strong, stimulating things. The smell of clean earth is far sweeter than the fragrance of artificial scents and essences. Let the aspirant to Brahmacharya also keep his hands and feet engaged in all the waking hours in healthful activity. Let him also fast occasionally.

The third step is to have clean companions, clean friends and clean books.

The last and not the least is prayer. Let him repeat *Ramanama* with all his heart regularly every day, and ask for divine grace.

None of these things is difficult for an average man or woman. They are simplicity itself. But their very simplicity is embarrassing. Where there is a will, the way is simple enough. Men have not the will for it and hence vainly grope. The fact, that the world rests on the observance, more or less, of Brahmacharya or restraint, means that it is necessary and practicable.

—*Y. I.* 29-4-1926.

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Female Purity

And why is there all this morbid anxiety about female purity ? Have women any say in the matter of male purity ? We hear nothing of women's anxiety about men's chastity. Why should men arrogate to themselves the right to regulate female purity ? It cannot be superimposed from without. It is a matter of evolution from within and therefore of individual self effort.—*Y. I.* 25-11-1926.

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The path of self-purification is hard and steep. To attain to perfect purity one has to become absolutely passion-free in thought, speech and action ; to rise above the opposing currents of love and hatred, attachment and repulsion.—*S. M. E. T.* Vol. II. p. 592.

X. CHASTITY

Chastity is not a hot-house growth. It cannot be superimposed. It cannot be protected by the surrounding wall of the purdah. It must grow from within, and to be worth anything, it must be capable of withstanding every unsought temptation.—M. K. G.

The man, who is wedded to Truth and worships Truth alone, proves unfaithful to her, if he applies his talents to anything else. How then can he minister to the senses ? A man, whose activities are wholly consecrated to the realisation of Truth, which requires utter selflessness, can have no time for the selfish purpose of begetting children and running a household. Realisation of Truth through self-gratification should, after what has been said before, appear a contradiction of terms.

If we look at it from the standpoint of ahimsa (non-violence), we find that the fulfilment of ahimsa is impossible without utter selflessness. Ahimsa means Universal Love. If a man gives his love to one woman, or a woman to one man, what is there left for all the world besides ? It simply means, "We two first, and the devil take all the rest of them." As a faithful wife must be prepared to sacrifice her all for the sake of her husband, and a faithful husband for the sake of his wife, it is clear that such persons cannot rise to the height of Universal Love, or look upon all mankind as kith and kin. For they have created a boundary wall round their love. The larger their family, the farther are they from

Universal Love. Hence one who would obey the law of ahimsa cannot marry, not to speak of gratification outside the marital bond.

Then what about people who are already married ? Will they never be able to realise Truth ? Can they never offer up their all at the altar of humanity ? There is a way out for them. They can behave as if they were not married. Those who have enjoyed this happy condition will be able to bear me out. Many have to my knowledge successfully tried the experiment. If the married couple can think of each other as brother and sister, they are freed for universal service. The very thought that all the women in the world are one's sisters, mothers or daughters will at once ennoble a man and snap his chains. The husband and wife do not lose anything here, but only add to their resources and even to their family. Their love becomes free from the impurity of lust and so grows stronger. With the disappearance of this impurity, they can serve each other better, and the occasions for quarrel become fewer. There are more occasions for quarrel, where the love is selfish and bounded.

If the foregoing argument is appreciated, a consideration of the physical benefits of chastity becomes a matter of secondary importance. How foolish it is intentionally to dissipate vital energy in sensual enjoyment ! It is a grave misuse to fritter away for physical gratification that which is given to man and woman for the full development of their bodily and mental powers. Such misuse is the root cause of many a disease.

Brahmacharya, like all other observances, must be observed in thought, word and deed. We are told in the Gita, and experience will corroborate the statement, that the foolish man, who appears to control his body but is nursing evil thoughts in his mind, makes a vain effort. It may be harmful to suppress the body, if the mind is at the same time allowed to go astray. Where the mind wanders, the body must follow sooner or later.

It is necessary here to appreciate a distinction. It is one thing to allow the mind to harbour impure thoughts ; it is a different thing altogether if it strays among them in spite of ourselves. Victory will be ours in the end, if we non-cooperate with the mind in its evil wanderings.

We experience every moment of our lives that often while the body is subject to our control, the mind is not. This physical control should never be relaxed, and in addition we must put forth a constant endeavour to bring the mind under control. We can do nothing more, nothing less. If we give way to the mind, the body and the mind will pull different ways, and we shall be false to ourselves. Body and mind may be said to go together, so long as we continue to resist the approach of every evil thought.

The observance of brahmacharya has been believed to be very difficult, almost impossible. In trying to find a reason for this belief, we see that the term brahmacharya has been taken in a narrow sense. Mere control of animal passion has been thought to be tantamount to observing brahmacharya. I feel that this conception is

incomplete and wrong. Brahmacharya means control of all the organs of sense. He, who attempts to control only one organ and allows all the others free play, is bound to find his effort futile. To hear suggestive stories with the ears, to see suggestive sights with the eyes, to taste stimulating food with the tongue, to touch exciting things with the hands, and then at the same time expect to control the only remaining organ, is like putting one's hands in a fire, and then expecting to escape being burnt. He, therefore, who is resolved to control the one must be likewise determined to control the rest. I have always felt that much harm has been done by the narrow definition of brahmacharya. If we practise simultaneous self-control in all directions, the attempt will be scientific and possible of success. Perhaps the palate is the chief sinner. That is why in the Ashram we have assigned to control of the palate a separate place among our observances.

Let us remember the root meaning of brahmacharya. Charya means course of conduct ; brahma-charya conduct adapted to the search of Brahma, i.e., Truth. From this etymological meaning arises the special meaning, viz., control of all the senses. We must entirely forget the incomplete definition which restricts itself to the sexual aspect only.—From *Yeravda Mandir*, Ch. III.

XI. LUSTING WITH THE EYE

"The sense-objects turn away from an abstemious soul, leaving the relish behind. The relish also disappears with the realisation of the Highest."—Bhagavadgeeta, II, 59.

Q.—I am a poor man employed in a mill. I am in a great fix. Whenever I go out, the sight of a fair face overwhelms me. I lose all self-control. I sometimes fear that I might be betrayed into indecorous behaviour. I once thought of committing suicide. But my good wife saved me. She suggested that I should take her with me whenever I stirred out of the house. The plan has worked but it is not always practicable. In desperation I often think that I should pluck out my offending eyes. But the consideration for my wife has deterred me. You are a man of God. Can't you suggest a remedy ?

A.—You are honest and frank. You should know that there are many people in the same plight as you are. This lusting with the eye is a common disease. It is on the increase. It has even attained a kind of respectability. This, however, should be no consolation to you. You have a brave wife. You dare not be unfaithful to her. And lusting after another woman is the height of unfaithfulness. It reduces marriage to a mockery. You should resolutely fight against the enemy. Treasure the thought that all other women are like blood-sisters to you. Give up the lewd literature, cinemas and lewd pictures that disfigure the press. Walk with your eyes

fixed to the earth ; and whilst you are doing so pray to the God within that He may cleanse your heart, and believe that He will deliver you from the curse. If necessary, wear thickly smoked glasses. You will find in them a first class external aid. There is really nothing to admire in the big cities with their oppressive hugeness and congestion and the same noises, and the same faces day in and day out. If we were not victims of the mighty force of inertia, our senses would sicken over the repetition of the same ugly phenomenon. In the day-time bury yourself in the duty before you, and at night do a little bit of star-gazing with the aid of a simple astronomical guide, and you will have before your eyes a spectacle which no cinema in the world can provide, and,it may be, you will one day find God peeping through the myriads of stars, and, if you attune yourself to the divine nightly manifestation, you will hear the soft and soothing music of the spheres. Try this every night and your eyes will act right and your heart will be sound. May God bless you.—*H*. 3-2-1940.

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Need of Divine Grace

Brahmacharya...does not mean mere physical self-control. It means much more. It means complete control over all the senses. Thus an impure thought is a breach of brahmacharya ; so is anger. All power comes from the preservation and sublimation of the vitality that is responsible for creation of life. If the vitality is husbanded instead of being dissipated, it is transmuted into creative energy of the highest order.

This vitality is continuously and even unconsciously dissipated by evil, or even rambling, disorderly, unwanted, thoughts. And since thought is the root of all speech and action the quality of the latter corresponds to that of the former. Hence perfectly controlled thought is itself power of the highest potency and can become self-acting. That seems to me to be the meaning of the silent prayer of the heart. If man is after the image of God, he has but to will a thing in the limited sphere allotted to him and it becomes. Such power is impossible in one who dissipates his energy in any way whatsoever, even as steam kept in a leaky pipe yields no power. The sexual act divorced from the deliberate purpose of generation is a typical and gross form of dissipation and has therefore been specially and rightly chosen for condemnation. But in one who has to organise vast masses of mankind for non-violent action the full control described by me has to be attempted and virtually achieved.

This control is unattainable save by the grace of God. There is a verse in the second chapter of the Gita which freely rendered means : "Sense-effects remain in abeyance whilst one is fasting or while the particular sense is starved, but the hankering does not cease except when one sees God face to face." This control is not mechanical or temporary. Once attained it is never lost. In that state vital energy is stored up without any chance of escaping by the innumerable outlets.

It has been said that such brahmacharya, if it is at all attainable, can be so only by cave-dwellers. A

brahmachari, it is said, should never see, much less touch, a woman. Doubtless a brahmachari may not think of, speak of, see or touch a woman *lustfully*. But the prohibition one finds in books on brahmacharya is mentioned without the important adverb. The reason for the omission seems to be that man is no impartial judge in such matters, and therefore cannot say when he is or is not affected by such contacts. Cupid's visitations are often unperceivable. Difficult though, therefore, brahmacharya is of observance when one freely mixes with the world, it is not of much value, if it is attainable only by retirement from the world.

—*H.*, 23-7-1938.

XII. MY VOW OF BRAHMACHARYA

I clearly saw that one aspiring to serve humanity could not do without it. It was borne in upon me that I should have more and more occasions for service of the kind I was rendering, and that I should find myself unequal to the task if I were engaged in the pleasures of family life and in the propogation and rearing of children. In a word, I could not live both after the flesh and the spirit...Without the observance of Brahmacharya service of the family would be inconsistent with service of the community. With Brahmacharya they would be perfectly consistent.

—M. K. G.

After full discussion and mature deliberation I took the vow of Brahmacharya in 1906. I had not shared my thoughts with my wife until then, but only consulted her at the time of taking the vow. She had no objection. But I was hard put to it in making the final resolve. I had not the necessary strength. How was I to control my passions? The elimination of carnal relationship with one's wife seemed then a strange thing. But I launched forth with faith in the sustaining power of God.

As I look back upon the twenty years of the vow, I am filled with pleasure and wonderment. The more or less successful practice of self-control had been going on since 1901. But the freedom and joy that came to me after taking the vow had never been experienced before 1906. Before the vow I had been open to being overcome by temptation at any moment. Now the vow

was a sure shield against temptation. The great potentiality of Brahmacharya daily became more and more patent to me. The vow was taken when I was in Phoenix. As soon as I was free from ambulance work, I went to Phoenix, whence I had to return to Johannesburg. In about a month of my returning there, the foundation of Satyagraha was laid. As though unknown to me, the Brahmacharya vow had been preparing me for it. Satyagraha had not been a preconceived plan. It came on spontaneously, without my having willed it. But I could see that all my previous steps had led up to that goal. I had cut down my heavy household expenses at Johannesburg and gone to Phoenix, to take, as it were, the Brahmacharya vow.

The knowledge that a perfect observance of Brahmacharya means realisation of Brahman I did not owe to the study of the Shastras. It slowly grew upon me with experience. The Shastraic texts on the subject I read only later in life. Every day of the vow has taken me nearer the knowledge that in Brahmacharya lies the protection of the body, the mind and the soul. For Brahmacharya was now no process of hard penance, it was a matter of consolation and joy. Every day revealed a fresh beauty in it.

But if it was a matter of ever increasing joy, let no one believe that it was an easy thing for me. Even while I am past fifty-six years, I realise how hard a thing it is. Every day I realise more and more that it is like walking on the sword's edge, and I see every moment the necessity for eternal vigilance.

Control of the palate is the first essential in the observance of the vow. I found that complete control of the palate made the observance very easy, and so I now pursued my dietetic experiments not merely from the vegetarian's but also from the Brahmachari's point of view. As the result of these experiments I saw that the Brahmachari's food should be limited, simple, spiceless and, if possible, uncooked.

Six years of experiment have showed me that the Brahmachari's ideal food is fresh fruit and nuts. The immunity from passion that I enjoyed when I lived on this food was unknown to me after I changed that diet. Brahmacharya needed no effort on my part in South Africa when I lived on fruits and nuts alone. It has been a matter of very great effort ever since I begun to take milk. How I had to go back to milk from a fruit diet will be considered in its proper place. It is enough to observe here that I have not the least doubt that milk diet makes the Brahmacharya vow difficult to observe. Let no one deduce from this that all Brahmacharis must give up milk. The effect on Brahmachaŕya of different kinds of food can be determined only after numerous experiments. I have yet to find a fruit substitute for milk which is an equally good muscle builder and easily digestible. The doctors, *vaidyas*, *hakims* have alike failed to enlighten me. Therefore, though I know milk to be partly a stimulant, I cannot for the time being advise any one to give it up.

As an external aid to Brahmacharya, fasting is as necessary as selection and restriction in diet. So over-

powering are the senses that they can be kept under control only when they are completely hedged in on all sides, from above and from beneath. It is common knowledge that they are powerless without food, and so fasting undertaken with a view to control of the senses is, I have no doubt, very helpful. With some, fasting is of no avail, because assuming that mechanical fasting alone will make them immune, they keep their bodies without food, but feast their minds upon all sorts of delicacies, thinking all the while as to what they will eat and what they will drink after the fast terminates. Such fasting helps them in controlling neither palate nor lust. Fasting is useful when mind co-operates with starving body, that is to say, when it cultivates a distate for the objects that are denied to the body. Mind is at the root of all sensuality. Fasting, therefore, has a limited use, for a fasting man may continue to be swayed by passion. But it may be said that extinction of the sexual passion is as a rule impossible without fasting, which may be said to be indispensable for the observance of Brahmacharya. Many aspirants after Brahmacharya fail, because in the use of their other senses they want to carry on as those who are not Brahmacharis. Their effort is therefore identical with the effort to experience the bracing cold of winter in the scorching summer months. There should be a clear line between the life of a Brahmachari and of one who is not. The resemblance that there is between the two is only apparent. The distinction ought to be clear as daylight. Both use their eyesight, but whereas the Brahmachari uses it to see the glories

of God, the other uses it to see the frivolity around him. Both use their ears, but whereas the one hears nothing but praises of God, the other feasts his ears upon ribaldry. Both often keep late hours, but whereas the one devotes them to prayer, the other fritters them away in wild and wasteful mirth. Both feed the inner man, but the one does so only to keep the temple of God in good repair, while the other gorges himself and makes the sacred vessel a stinking gutter. Thus both live as the poles apart, and the distance between them will grow and not diminish with the passage of time.

Brahmacharya means control of the senses in thought, word and deed. Every day I have been realising more and more the necessity for restraints of the kind I have detailed above. There is no limit to the possibilities or renunciation, even as there is none to those of Brahmacharya. Such Brahmacharya is impossible of attainment by limited effort. For many, it must remain only as an ideal. An aspirant after Brahmacharya will always be conscious of his shortcomings, will seek out the passions lingering in the innermost recesses of his heart, and will incessantly strive to get rid of them. So long as thought is not under complete control of the will, Brahmacharya in its fulness is absent. Involuntary thought is an affection of the mind, and curbing of thought therefore means curbing of the mind which is even more difficult to curb than the wind. Nevertheless the existence of God within makes even control of the mind possible. Let no one think that it is impossible because it is difficult. It is the highest goal, and it is no

wonder that the highest effort should be necessary to attain it.

But it was after coming to India that I realised that such Brahmacharya was impossible to attain merely by human effort. Until then I had been labouring under the delusion that fruit diet alone would enable me to eradicate all passions, and I had flattered myself with the belief that I had nothing more to do.

But I must not anticipate the chapter of my struggles. Meanwhile let me make it clear that those, who desire to observe Brahmacharya with a view to realising God, need not despair, provided their faith in God is equal to their confidence in their own effort.

"The sense-objects turn away from an abstemious soul, leaving the relish behind. The relish also disappears with the realisation of the Highest." Therefore His name and His grace are the last resources of the aspirant after *moksha*. This truth came to me only after my return to India.—*S. M. E. T.* Vo. I. p. 483.

Part II

IDEAL MARRIAGE

I. THE MARRIAGE IDEAL

Nature has created sexes as complements of each other. Their functions are defined as are their forms.—M. K. G.

A FRIEND writes :

"In the current issue of *Harijan Sevak* in your article entitled "A Moral Dilemma" you have observed, "Many marriage taboos appear to have grown out of social customs. They are nowhere seen to rest on any vital, moral or religious principle." My own instinct based upon my experience tells me that probably these taboos were promulgated out of eugenic considerations. It is a well-known principle of the science of eugenics that the issue resulting from the crossing of exogamous elements is eugenically fitter than the product of endogamous unions. That is the reason why in Hinduism *Sagotra* and *Sapinda* marriages are interdicted. On the other hand if we admit social custom with all its kaleidoscopic variety and change to be the sole reason for these taboos, we are left with no strong reason why marriages between paternal uncle and niece, or for the matter of that between brother and sister, should absolutely be tabooed. If, as you say, the begetting of progeny be the only legitimate object of marriage, then the choice of partners would become purely a question of eugenic harmony. Are all other considerations to be ruled out of court as relatively unimportant ? If not, what should be their order of precedence ? I would set it down as follows :

(1) Mutual attraction or love ;
(2) Eugenic fitness ;

(3) Approval and consent of the respective families concerned ; and consideration for the interest of the social order to which one belongs ;

(4) Spiritual development.

What do *you* say to it ?

The Hindu shastras have emphatically set down procreation as the sole end of marriage, as the ancient benediction that is pronounced upon the prospective housewife by her elders at the time of marriage viz., "May you be blessed with eight children," shows. This bears out your contention that cohabitation in marriage should only be for the purpose of begetting offspring, never for sensual gratification. But, then, would you expect a married couple to be satisfied with only one offspring irrespective of whether it is male or female ? Besides the longing to perpetuate one's line which you have very properly recognized, there also has existed amongst us a strong feeling that this can be properly done only through a male issue. And the birth of a girl, therefore, is less welcome than that of a boy. In view of this very widespread craving for a male issue, don't you think that your ideal of having only one off-spring should be modified so as to include the begetting of a male issue in addition to the possible female ones ?

I entirely agree with you that a married person who confines the sex act strictly to the purpose of procreation should be regarded as a brahmachari. I also hold with you that in the case of a married couple who has practised the rule of purity and self-control before and after marriage a single act of union must lead to conception. In support of your first point there is in our shastras the celebrated story of Vishwamitra and Arundhati, the wife of Vasishtha who in spite of her one hundred sons was greeted by Vishwamitra as a perfect brahmacharini,

whose command even the elements were bound to obey because her connubial relations with her husband were purely directed to the attainment and discharage of the function of motherhood. But I doubt whether even the Hindu shastras would support your ideal of having only one offspring irrespective of whether it is male or female. It seems to me, therefore, that if you liberalise your ideal of married life so as to include the begetting of one male offspring in addition to the possible female ones, it would go a long way towards satisfying many married couples. Otherwise, I am afraid, most people would find it to be harder to limit sexual relationship to the procreation of the first child and then irrespective of its sex practice complete abstention for the rest of life and never to marry at all. I am being slowly forced to the view that sexuality is man's primitive nature, self-control is a cultivated virtue representing a step in his upward evolution towards religion and spirituality which is the natural law of his development. That is why self-control has been held in such high regard. I honour the person who lives up to the ideal of regarding sexual union only as a means for procreation. I also agree that coming together under any other circumstance would be sensual indulgence. But I am not prepared to condemn it as a heinous sin or to regard a husband and wife who cannot help their nature as fallen creatures to be treated with cheap pity or high-brow contempt."

I do not know what the scientific basis for the various taboos in respect of marriage relationships is. But it seems to me clear that a social custom or usage that helps the practice of virtue and self-control should have the sanctity of a moral law. If it is eugenic considerations that are at the root of interdiction of marriages

between brother and sister, then they ought to apply equally to cousin-marriages. A safe rule of conduct, therefore, would be as a rule to respect such taboos where they exist in a particular society. I accept generally the conditions for an ideal marriage enumerated by my correspondent. But I would change their order of importance and put 'love' last in the list. By giving it the first place, the other conditions are liable to be overshadowed by it altogether and rendered more or less nugatory. Therefore, spiritual development ought to be given the first place in the choice for marriage. Service should come next, family considerations and the interest of the social order should have the third place, and mutual attraction or 'love' the fourth and the last place. This means that 'love' alone, where the other four conditions are not fulfilled, should not be held as a valid reason for marriage. At the same time, marriage where there is no love should equally be ruled out even though all the other conditions are fully complied with. I should score out the condition of eugenic fitness, because the begetting of offspring being the central purpoe of marriage eugenic fitness cannot be treated merely as a 'condition,' it is the *sine qua non* of marriage.

Hindu shastras certainly show a marked bias in favour of the male offspring. But this originated at a time when physical warfare was the order of the day and adequate man-power was a *sine qua non* of success in the struggle for existence. The number of sons that a man had was therefore then looked upon as a mark of virility and strength, and to facilitate the begetting of

numerous offspring even polygamy was sanctioned and encouraged. But if we regard marriage as a sacrament, there is room in its only for one offspring, and that is why in our shastras the first offspring is described as *Dharmaja*, i.e. 'duty born,' all subsequent issues being referred to as *Kamaja*, i.e., 'lust-born.' I make no distinction between son and daughter. Such distinction is in my opinion invidious and wrong. The birth of a son or a daughter should be welcome alike.

The story of Vishwamitra and Vasishtha is good as an illustration of the principle that the sexual act performed solely for the purpose of begetting offspring is not inconsistent with the highest ideal of brahmacharya. But the whole of that story need not be taken literally. Sexual intercourse for the purpose of carnal satisfaction is reversion to animality, and it should therefore be man's endeavour to rise about it. But failure to do so as between husband and wife cannot be regarded as a sin or a matter of obloquy. Millions in this world eat for the satisfaction of their palate ; similarly millions of the husbands and wives indulge in the sex act for their carnal satisfaction and will continue to do so and also pay the inexorable penalty in the shape of numberless ills with which nature visits all violations of its order. The ideal of absolute brahmacharya or of married brahmacharya is for those who aspire to a spiritual or higher life ; it is the *sine qua non* of such life.—*H*. 5-6-1937.

II. MARRIED BRAHMACHARYA

Life-long Brahmacharya is a consummation devoutly to be wished; but he who cannot control his passions, whose mind and senses lust after the flesh must enter 'Grihastha Ashrama' and lead a pure house-holder's life. For him the attempt at life-long Brahmacharya is vain. He will not give up his faith in the ideal, but he will approach it by gradual practice in self-restraint.—M. K. G.

A friend writes:

"I have long since held with you that self-control is the only sovereign method for attaining birth control. That the sexual act is meant for procreation only, and apart from it, in any shape or form, would amount to unnatural gratification of lust, needs no proof. But sometimes this brings one up against a grave dilemma. Supposing that the sexual act, once or twice, fails to lead to conception, what is one to do then? Where is one to draw the limit? It is hard finally to give up all hope of begetting offspring. On the other hand, unlimited indulgence in the sexual act must result in the man being drained of all vitality. Again, should such a person be told to regard his failure to beget progeny of the first or the second chance, as a mark of adverse fate and on that score to abstain from having any further intercourse thereafter? But that would require an exceptional degree of self-possession and spiritual strength on the part of the person concerned. Instances of people begetting progeny in their declining years, after repeated failure during the years of manhood and youth, are

> by no means either unknown or rare. That makes the observance of complete abstinence still more difficult, and the position becomes further complicated when the parties happen to be otherwise healthy and free from any physical defect."

I admit the difficulty, but the difficulty is inherent in the problem itself. The road to any progress is strewn with such difficulty, and the story of man's ascent in the scale of evolution is co-extensive with the history of the successful overcoming of these difficulties. Take the story of the attempts to conquer the Himalayas. The higher you go the steeper becomes the climb, the more difficult the ascent, so much so that its highest peak still remains unvanquished. The enterprise has already exacted a heavy toll of sacrifice. Yet every year sees fresh attempts made only to end in failure like their predecessors. All that has, however, failed to damp the spirit of the explorers. If that is the case with the conquest of the Himalayas, what about the conquest of self, which is a harder job by far, even as the reward is richer ? The scaling of the Himalayas can, at best, give a temporary feeling of elation and triumph. But the reward of the conquest of self is a spiritual bliss that knows no waning and grows ever more and more. It is a well-known maxim of the science of brahmacharya that insemination in the case of a man who has properly kept the rules of brahmacharya cannot, ought not to, fail to lead to conception. And this is just as it should be. When a man has completely conquered his animality, involuntary incontinence becomes impossible, and the desire for sexual gratification for its own sake ceases

altogether. Sexual union then takes place only when there is a desire for offspring. This is the meaning of what has been described as 'Married Brahamcharya.' In other words, a person who obeys this rule, though leading a married life, attains the same state as and is equal in merit to one who completely abstains from the sexual act, which is only a means for procreation, never for self-indulgence. In practice, it is true, this ideal is seen to be rarely realised in its completeness. But in shaping our ideals we cannot think in terms of our weaknesses or the possible lapses. The present tendency, however, is to take a complete swing round, and the protagonists of contraceptives have almost set up self-indulgence as their ideal. Self-indulgence obviously can never be an ideal. There can be no limit to the practice of an ideal. But unlimited self-indulgence, as everybody would admit, can only result in certain destruction of the individual or the race concerned. Hence self-control alone can be our ideal, and it has been so regarded from the earliest times. Therefore we have to explore the means of its attainment, not to circumvent it.

It has become my settled conviction that most of the difficulties that are experienced in connection with the practice of brahmacharya are due to our ignorance about its laws and would of themselves disappear if we discovered them. Let us, for instance, examine the poser propounded by our correspondent in the ideal light. In the ideal state, in the first place, such a contingency will never arise, because in a normally healthy couple, who have from their childhood upward

observed the rules of brahmacharya, sexual union can never prove infertile. In practice, however, anomalies do arise. The only rule that can be laid down in such instances is that the coitus may be permitted once at the end of the monthly period till conception is established. If its object is achieved it must be abjured forthwith, for mere sensual gratification should never be its object. It is my faith based on my experience that bodily and mental health increases in the same ratio as bodily and mental chastity. Nor is it to be wondered at. A substance that is capable of producing such a wonderful being as man cannot but, when properly conserved, be transmuted into matchless energy and strength. Anyone can test for himself the truth of this observation of the shastras for himself by personal experience. And the rule holds good in respect of woman no less than man. The real difficulty, however, is that we vainly expect to be free from outward manifestations of lust, while harbouring it in our minds, with the result that physically and mentally we become utter wrecks, and our lives, in the words of the Gita, become a living lie or hypocrisy personified.—*H*. 20-3-1937.

III. ON THE THRESHOLD OF MARRIED LIFE

You will guard your wife's honour and be not her master, but her true friend. You will hold her body and her soul as sacred as I trust she will hold your body and your soul. To that end you will have to live a life of prayerful toil, and simplicity and self-restraint. Let not either of you regard another as the object of his or her lust.—M. K. G.

(At the time of the annual meeting of the Gandhi Seva Sangh held at Hudli in April 1937, two marriage ceremonies were performed, one of the brides being Gandhiji's grand-daughter and the other a sister of Sri Mahadev Desai. At the close of the ceremonies, which were of the simplest character, Gandhiji addressed the married couples privately as follows) :

You must know that I do not believe in ceremonies except to the extent that they awaken in us a sense of duty. I have had that attitude of mind ever since I began to think for myself. The *mantras* you have repeated and the vows you have taken were all in Sanskrit, but they were all translated for you. We had the Sanskrit text because I know that the Sanskrit word has a power under the influence of which one would love to come.

One of the wishes expressed by the husband during the ceremony is that the bride may be the mother of a good and healthy son. The wish did not shock me.

It does not mean that procreation is obligatory, but it means that if progeny is wanted, marriage performed in a strictly religious spirit is essential. He who does not want a child need not marry at all. Marriage for the satisfaction of sexual appetite is no marriage. It is *vyabhichara*—concupiscence. Today's ceremony, therefore, means that the sexual act is permitted only when there is a clear desire by both for a child. The whole conception is sacred. The act has therefore to be performed prayerfully. It is not preceded by the usual courtship designed to provide sexual excitement and pleasure. Such union may only be once in a life-time, if no other child is desired. Those who are not morally and physically healthy have no business to unite, and if they do, it is *vyabhichara*—concupiscence. You must unlearn the lesson, if you have learnt it before, that marriage is for the satisfaction of animal appetite. It is a superstition. The whole ceremony is performed in the presence of the sacred fire. Let the fire make ashes of all the lust in you.

I would also ask you to disabuse yourselves of another superstition which is rampant now-a-days. It is being said that restraint and abstinence are wrong and free satisfaction of the sexual appetite and free love is the most natural thing. There was never a more ruinous superstition. You may be incapable of attaining the ideal, your flesh may be weak, but do not therefore lower the ideal, do not make irreligion your religion. In your weak moments remember what I am telling you. The remembrance of this solemn occasion may well steady

and restrain you. The very purpose of marriage is restraint and sublimation of the sexual passion. If there is any other purpose, marriage is no consecration but marriage for other purposes besides having progeny.

You are being united in marriage as friends and equals. If the husband is called *swamin*, the wife is *swamini*—each master of the other, each helpmate of the other, each co-operating with the other in the performance of life's tasks and duties. To you boys I would say that if you are gifted with better intellects and richer emotions, infect the girls with them. Be their true teachers and guides, help them and guide them, but never hinder them or misguide them. Let there be complete harmony of thought and word and deed between you, may you have no secrets from each other, may you be one in soul.

Don't be hypocrites, don't break your health in the vain effort of performing what may be impossible for you. Restraint never ruins one's health. What ruins one's health is not restraint but outward suppression. A really self-restrained person grows every day from strength to strength and from peace to more peace. The very first step in self-restraint is the restraint of thoughts. Understand your limitations and do only as much as you can. I have placed the ideal before you—the right angle. Try as best you can to attain the right angle. But if you fail, there is no cause for grief or shame. I have simply explained to you that marriage is a consecration, a new birth, even as the sacred thread ceremony is a consecration and a new birth. Let not

what I have told you alarm you or weaken you. Always aim at complete harmony of thought and word and deed. Always aim at purifying your thoughts and everything will be well. There is nothing more potent than thought. Deed follows word and word follows thought. The world is the result of a mighty thought, and where the thought is mighty and pure the result is always mighty and pure. I want you to go hence armed with the armour of a noble ideal, and I assure you no temptation can harm you, no impurity can tough you.

Remember the various ceremonies that have been explained to you. Look at the simple-looking ceremony of *madhuparka*. The whole world is full of *madhu*—sweet nectar or honey—if only you will partake of it after the rest of the world has taken its share of it. It means enjoyment by means of renunciation.

"But if there is no desire for progency, should there be no marriage ?" asked one of the bridegrooms.

Gandhiji replied as follows :

"Certainly not. I do not believe in Platonic marriages. In certain rare cases men are known to have married women to protect the latter and not for any physical union at all. But those cases are very rare indeed. You must read all that I have written on pure married life. What I read in the Mahabharata is daily growing upon me. Vyasa is described therein as having performed *niyoga*. He is not described as beautiful, but he was the reverse of it. His form is represented as terrible, he made no amorous gestures, but he smeared his whole body with ghee before he performed the union. He

performed the act not for lust but for procreation. The desire for a child is perfectly natural, and once the desire is satisfied there should be no union.

"Manu has described the first child as *Dharmaja*—born out of a sense of duty, and children born after the first as *Kamaja*—carnally born. That gives in a nutshell the law of sexual relations. And what is God but the Law? And to obey God is to perform the Law. Remember that you were thrice asked to repeat: 'I will not transgress the Law in any respects.' Even if we had a handful of men and women prepared to abide by the Law, we should have a race of men and women stalwart and true.

"Remember that I really came to enjoy my married life after I ceased to look at Ba sexually. I took the vow of abstinence when I was in the prime of youth and health, when I was young enough to enjoy married life in the accepted sense of the term. I saw in a flash that I was born, as we all are, for a sacred mission. I did not know this when I was married. But on coming to my senses I felt that I must see that the marriage subserved the mission for which I was born. Then indeed did I realize true *dharma*. True happiness came into our lives only after the vow was taken. Ba, though she looks frail, has a fine constitution and toils from morning until night. She would never have done so, had she continued to be the object of my lust.

"And yet I woke up late in the sense that I had lived the married life for some years. You are lucky enough to be aroused in good time. Circumstances,

when I was married, were as unpropitious as they could be. For you they are as propitious as they could be. There was one thing, though, that I possessed and that carried me through. It was the armour of truth. That protected me and saved me. Truth has been the very foundation of my life. Brahmacharya and ahimsa were born later out of truth. Whatever, therefore, you do, be true to yourselves and to the world. Hide not your thoughts. If it is shameful to reveal them, it is more shameful to think them."—*H*. 24-4-1937.

IV. TO THE MARRIED AND THE UNMARRIED

What chiefly distinguishes man from the beast is that man from his age of discretion begins to practise a life of continual self-restraint. God has enabled man to distinguish between the sister, his mother, his daughter and his wife.—M. K. G.

(In his Preface to the second edition (1928) of "Self-restraint *versus* Self-indulgence," a collection of his articles on the subject which had been published in *Young India* and *Harijan*, Gandhiji has given the following instructions for the guidance of those "who have not made self-indulgence a religion, but who are struggling to regain lost self-control which should under normal conditions be our natural state.")

1. Remember if you are married that your wife is your friend, companion and co-worker, not an instrument of sexual enjoyment.

2. Self-control is the law of your being. Therefore the sexual act can be performed only when both desire it, and that too subject to rules which in their lucidity both may have agreed upon.

3. If you are unmarried you owe it to yourself, to society and to your future partner to keep yourself pure. If you cultivate this sense of loyalty, you will find it as an infallible protection against all temptation.

4. Think always of that unseen Power which though we may never see we all feel within us as watching

and noting every impure thought, and you will find that Power ever helping you.

5. Laws governing a life of self-restraint must be necessarily different from a life of self-indulgence. Therefore you will regulate your society, your reading, your haunts of recreation and your food.

You will seek the society of the good and the pure.

You will resolutely refrain from reading passion-breeding novels and magazines and read the works that sustain humanity. You will make one book your constant companion for reference and guidance.

You will avoid theatres and cinemas. Recreation is where you may not dissipate yourself but recreate yourself. You will therefore attend *Bhajan Mandalis* where the word and the tune uplift the soul.

You will eat not to satisfy your palate but your hunger. A self-indulgent man lives to eat; a self-restrained man eats to live. Therefore you will abstain from all irritating condiments, alcohol which excites the nerves, and narcotics which deaden the sense of right and wrong. You will regulate the quantity and time of your meals.

6. When your passions threaten to get the better of you, go down on your knees and cry out to God for help. *Ramanama* is my infallible Help. As extraneous aid take a hip-bath, i.e., sit in a tub full of cold water with your legs out of it, and you will find your passions have immediately cooled. Sit in it for a few minutes unless you are weak and there is danger of a chill.

7. Take brisk walking exercise in the open air early

in the morning and at night before going to bed.

8. "Early to bed and early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise," is a sound proverb. Nine o'clock to bed and four o'clock to rise is a good rule. Go to bed on an empty stomach. Therefore your last meal must not be after six p.m.

9. Remember that man is a representative of God to serve all that lives and thus to express God's dignity and love. Let service be your sole joy, and you will need no other enjoyment in life.

* * *

Advice to Students

Never lose faith in God, and therefore in yourselves, and remember that if you allow refuge to a single evil thought, remember that you lack that faith. Untruthfulness, uncharitableness, violence, sensuality, all these things are strangers to that faith. Remember that we have in this world no enemy greater than ourselves. The *Bhagavadgita* proclaims it in almost every verse. If I am to sum up the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount I find the same answer. My reading of the Koran has led me to the same conclusion. No one can harm us so much as we can oursevles. If you are therefore brave boys and girls you will fight desperately and valiently against the whole brood of these thoughts. No sinful act was ever done in this world without the prompting of a sinful thought. You have to exercise strict vigilance over every thought welling up in your breast.

Many students, both boys and girls, have often told me that whilst they understand with their intellect the

force of my remarks, they find it impossible in practice to control their thoughts, and thus they give up the struggle and give way to despair, and then finding some evil books to stimulate themselves they nurse the evil thoughts.

I want to draw a sharp distinction between the two processes that happen within us. Except for perfect beings evil thoughts will arise in every breast. Hence it is necessary for us to offer incessant prayer to God to keep us free from evil thoughts. That is the process which does us good. The other process is to think evil thoughts and to take delight in them. It is the most dangerous and harmful process, and it is that process which I invite you to fight with all your might. This is the easiest thing to do. For every one of us can make the choice as to the guests we might invite or encourage in our own breasts. We might not be able to help the onslaught of the enemy, but it is given to us to die in the attempt to repel the onslaught. This is one recipe. The other recipe is to reserve half an hour every day for spinning for the starving millions.—*Y.I.* 27-10-1927.

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When you have attained self-mastery and learnt to control your passions you will not utter notes of despair. You cannot give your hearts and profess poverty of action. To give one's heart is to give all. You must, to start with, have hearts to give. All this you can do if you will cultivate them.

During student days you are expected not to dissipate energy but to conserve it. I observe that over

fifty per cent of you are married. If you will make the best of a bad job, you will in spite of your marriage put a severe restraint upon your passions and lead whilst you are prosecuting your studies a life of pure *Brahmacharya*. And you will find that at the end of your studies you are all the better for that restraint, physically, mentally and spiritually.

Do not by any means consider that I am presenting to you something that is utterly impossible of execution. The cult of those, who, though they may be married, are exercising perfect self-restraint on themselves, is increasing with much profit to themselves, and to the general benefit of mankind.—*Y.I.* 19-9-1929.

V. THE IDEAL HUSBAND

I have not a shadow of a doubt that married people, if they wish well to the country and want to see India become a nation of strong and handsome, full-formed men and women, they would practise perfect self-restraint.—M. K. G.

"I am a husband aged thirty. My wife is about the same age. We have five children, of which two are fortunately dead. I know the responsibility for the rest of our children. But I find it difficult if not impossible to discharge that responsibility. You have advised self-restraint. Well, I have practised it for the last three years, but that is very much against my partner's wish. She insists on what poor mortals call the joy of life. You from your superior height may call it a sin. But my partner does not see it in that light. Nor is she afraid of bearing more children to me. She had not the sense of responsibility that I flatter myself with the belief I have. My parents side more with my wife than with me and there are daily quarrels. The denial of satisfaction to my wife has made her so peevish and so irritable that she flares up on the slightest pretext. My problem now is how to solve the difficulty. The children I have are too many for me. I am too poor to support them. The wife seems utterly irreconcilable. If she does not have the satisfaction she demands, she may even go astray, or go mad, or commit suicide. I tell you sometimes I feel that if the law of the land permitted it, I would shoot down all unwanted children as you would stray dogs. For the last three months I have gone without the second meal, without tiffin. I have business obligations which prevent me from

fasting for days. I get no compassion from the wife because she considers I am a humbug. I know the literature on birth control. It is temptingly written. And I have read your book on self-restraint. I find myself between the devil and the deep sea."

The foregoing is a faithful paraphrase of a heart-rending letter from a young man who has given me his full name and address and whom I have known for some years. Being afraid to give his name, he tells me he wrote twice before anonymously, hoping that I would deal with his communications in the pages of *Young India*. I receive so many anonymous letters of this type that I hesitate to deal with them, even as I have considerable hesitation in dealing with this letter, although I know it to be perfectly genuine and know it to be a letter from a striving soul. The subject matter is so delicate. But I see that I may not shirk an obvious duty, claiming as I do claim a fair amount of experience of such cases and more especially because my method has given relief in several similar cases.

The condition in India, so far as English-educated Indians are concerned, is doubly difficult. The gulf between husband and wife from the point of view of social attainments is almost too wide to be bridgeable. Some young men seem to think that they have solved it satisfactorily by simply throwing their wives overboard, although they know that in their caste there is no divorce possible and therefore no re-marriage on the part of their wives possible. Yet others,—and this is the far more numerous class,—use their wives merely as vehicles of enjoyment without sharing their intellectual life with

them. A very small number,—but daily growing,—has a quickened conscience and are faced with the moral difficulty such as my correspondent is faced with.

In my opinion, sexual union to be legitimate is permissible only when both the parties desire it. I do not recognise the right of either partner to compel satisfaction. And if my position is correct in the case in point, there is no moral obligation on the part of the husband to yield to the wife's importunities. But this refusal at once throws a much greater and more exalted responsibility on the husband's shoulders. He will not look down upon his wife from his insolent height, but will humbly recognise that what to him is not a necessity is to her a fundamental necessity. He will therefore treat her with the utmost gentleness and love, and will have confidence in his own purity to transmute his partner's passion into energy of the highest type. He will therefore have to become her real friend, guide and physician. He will have to give her his fullest confidence, and with inexhaustible patience explain to her the moral basis of his action, the true nature of the relationship that should subsist between husband and wife and the true meaning of marriage. He will find in the process that many things that were not clear to him before will be clear, and he will draw his partner closer to him if his own restraint is truthful.

In the case in point I cannot help saying that the desire not to have more children is not enough reason for refusing satisfaction. It appears almost cowardly to reject one's wife's advances merely for fear of having to support children. A check upon an unlimited increase

in the family is a good ground for both the parties jointly and individually putting a restraint upon sexual desire, but it is not sufficient warrant for one to refuse the privileges of a common bed to the other.

And why this impatience of children ? Surely there is enough scope for honest, hard-working and intelligent men to earn enough for a reasonable number of children. I admit that for one like my correspondent, who is honestly trying to devote his whole time to the service of the country, it is difficult to support a large and growing family and at the same time to serve a country, millions of whose children are semi-starved. I have often expressed the opinion in these pages that it is wrong to bring forth progeny in India so long as she is in bondage. But that is a very good reason for young men and young women to abstain from marriage, not a conclusive reason for one partner refusing sexual co-operation to the other. That co-operation can be lawfully refused, it is a duty to refuse, when the call for Brahmacharya on the highest ground of pure religion is imperative. And when such a call has really come, it will have its healthy reaction upon the partner. Assuming, however, that it does not produce such reaction in time, it will still be a duty to adhere to restraint even at the risk of losing the life or the sanity of one's partner. The cause of Brahmacharya demands sacrifices no less heroic than say, the cause of truth, or of one's country. In view of what I have said above, it is hardly necessary to state that artificial control of birth is an immoral practice having no place in the conception of life that underlies my argument.—*Y.I.* 26-4-1928.

VI. MY IDEAL OF A WIFE

Millions of Hindu wives live in perfect peace and are queens in their own homes. They exercise an authority over their husbands which any woman would envy. It is an authority which love gives.—M. K. G.

Q.—In Hinduism devotion of wife to her husband and her complete merger in him is the highest aim, never mind whether the husband is a fiend or an embodiment of love. If this be the correct conduct for a wife, may she, in the teeth of opposition by her husband, undertake national service ? Or must she only go as far as the husband will permit her to go ?

A.—My ideal of a wife is Sita and of a husband Rama. But Sita was no slave of Rama. Or each was slave of the other. Rama is ever considerate to Sita. Where there is true love, the question asked does not occur. Where there is no true love, the bond has never existed. But the Hindu household of today is a conundrum. Husbands and wives when they are married know nothing of one another. Religious sanction fortified by custom and the even flow of the lives of the married people keep the peace in the vast majority of Hindu households. But when either wife or husband holds views out of the ordinary, there is danger of jars. In the case of the husband he has no scruples. He does not consider himself under any obligation to consult his partner's wishes. He regards his wife as his property. And the poor wife who believes in the husband's claim

often suppresses herself. I think there is a way out. Mirabai has shown the way. The wife has a perfect right to take her own course and meekly brave the consequences when she knows herself to be in the right and when her resistance is for a nobler purpose.

Q.—If a husband is, say, a meat-eater and the wife considers meat-eating an evil, may she follow her own bent ? May she even try by all loving ways to wean her husband from meat-eating or the like ? Or is she bound to cook meat for her husband or, worse still, is she bound to eat it, if the husband requires her ? If you say that the wife may take her own course, how can a joint household be run when the one compels and the other rebels ?

A.—This question is partly answered in the answer to the first. A wife is not bound to be an accomplice in her husband's crimes. And when she holds anything to be wrong she must dare to do the right. But seeing that the wife's function is manage the household and thus to cook, as the husband's is to earn for the family, she is bound to cook meat for the family, if both have been meat-eaters before. If, on the other hand, in a vegetarian family the husband becomes a meat-eater and seeks to compel the wife to cook for him, the wife is in no way bound to cook what offends her sense of right. The peace of the household is a most desirable thing. But it cannot be an end in itself. For me, the married state is as much a state of discipline as any other. Life is a duty, a probation. Married life is intended to promote mutual good both here and hereafter. It is meant also to serve humanity. When one partner breaks the law of discipline, the right accrues to the other of breaking

the bond. The breach here is moral and not physical. It precludes divorce. The wife or the husband separates but to serve the end of which they had united. Hinduism regards each as absolute equal of the other. No doubt a different practice has grown up, no one knows since when. But so have many other evils crept into it. This, however, I do know that Hinduism leaves the individual absolutely free to do what he or she likes for the sake of self-realisations for which and which alone he or she is born.—*Y.I.* 21-10-1926.

VII. MOTHERHOOD

Marriage is a natural thing in life, and to consider it derogatory in any sense is wholly wrong...The ideal is to look upon marriage as a sacrament, and therefore, to lead a life of self-restraint in the married estate.—M. K. G.

A sister, who is a good worker and was anxious to remain celibate in order better to serve the country's cause, has recently married having met the mate of her dreams. But she imagines that in doing so she has done wrong and fallen from the high ideal which she had set before herself. I have tried to rid her mind of this delusion. It is no doubt an excellent thing for girls to remain unmarried for the sake of service, but the fact is that only one in a million is able to do so. Marriage is a natural thing in life, and to consider it derogatory in any sense is wholly wrong. When one imagines any act a fall it is difficult, however hard one tries, to raise oneself. The ideal is to look upon marriage as a sacrament and, therefore,to lead a life of self-restraint in the married estate. Marriage in Hinduism is one of the four Ashramas. In fact, the other three are based on it. But in modern times marriage has unfortunately come to be regarded purely as a physical union. The other three Ashramas are all but non-existent.

The duty of the abovementioned and other sisters who think like her is, therefore, not to look down upon

marriage but to give it its due place and make of it the sacrament it is. If they exercise the necessary self-restraint, they will find growing within themselves a greater strength for service. She who wishes to serve will naturally choose a partner in life who is of the same mind, and their joint service will be the country's gain.

It is a tragedy that generally speaking our girls are not taught the duties of motherhood. But if married life is a religious duty, motherhood must be so too. To be an ideal mother is no easy task. The procreation of children has to be undertaken with a full sense of responsibility. The mother should know what is her duty from the moment she conceives right up to the time the child is born. And she who gives intelligent, healthy and well-brought-up children to the country is surely rendering a service. When the latter grow up they too will be ready to serve. The truth of the matter is that those who are filled with a living spirit of service will always serve whatever their position in life. They will never adopt a way of life which will interfere with service.—*H*. 22-3-1942.

* * *

Unwanted Motherhood

The use of contraceptives is infinitely more tempting than the whisky bottle. But it is no more lawful than the sparkling liquid for its fatal temptation. Nor can opposition to the use of either be given up in despair, because their use seems to be growing. If the opponents have faith in their mission, it has to be pursued. A voice in the wilderness has a potency which voices

uttered in the midst of "the maddening crowd" lack. For, the voice in the wilderness has meditation, deliberation, and unquenchable faith behind it, whilst the babel of voices has generally nothing but the backing of the experience of personal enjoyment, or the false and sentimental pity for the unwanted children and their suffering mothers. Argument of personal experience has as much weight as an act of a drunkard. The argument of pity is a trap into which it is dangerous to fall. Sufferings of unwanted children and of equally unwanted motherhood are punishments or warnings devised by beneficent nature. Disregard of the law of discipline and restraint is suicide. Ours is a state of probation. If we refuse to bear the yoke of discipline, we court failure like cowards, we avoid battle and give up the only joy of living.—*H*. 27-3-1937.

VIII. CHILDREN

Manu has described the first child as dharmaja—born out of a sense of duty, and children born after the first as kamaja—carnally born. That gives in a nutshell the law of sexual relations. And what is God but the Law? And to obey God is to perform the Law.—M. K. G.

A Bangalore correspondent asks :

> "You say that a married couple may have sexual union only when there is a mutual desire for a child and on no other account. Please let me know why one should wish for a child at all. Many people wish for children without fully realising the responsibilities of parenthood, and many more wish for children fully knowing that they are incapable of discharging the responsibilities of a parent. Many persons who are physically and mentally unfit for parenthood wish for children. Don't you think that it is wrong for these persons to procreate ?
>
> I would like to know the motive behind the desire for children. Many people wish for children to bequeath their possessions and to break the monotony of their life. A few people wish for a male child lest the gates of Heaven would not be opened for them. Are not these people wrong in wishing for a child ?"

It is good to seek causes for things. But it is not always possible to discover them. The desire for children is universal. But I do not know any convincing cause, if to see oneself perpetuated through one's descendants is not a sufficient and convincing cause. My proposition,

however, is not vitiated if the cause I give for the desire is not found sufficiently convincing. The desire is there. It seems to be natural. I am not sorry for having been born. I cannot be unlawful for me to see the best in me reproduced. Anyway, till I see evil in procreation itself and till I see that the sexual act for mere pleasure is justifiable, I must hold that the sexual act is justified only where there is desire for children. I understand that this was so clear to the makers of the Smritis that Manu described only the first-born as children born of *dharma* and the rest of *kama*—lust. The more thought I give to the subject as dispassionately as is possible, the more convinced I feel about the correctness of the position I have taken and am enforcing. It is becoming clearer to me that the difficulty lies in our ignorance of the subject with which needless secrecy is being associated. Our thought is clouded. We dread to face consequences. We resort to half-measures as if they were perfect or final and thus render them most difficult of execution. If our thoughts were clear, if we became sure of our ground, our speech and action would be firm.

Thus, if I am sure that every morsel of food I take is for building and sustaining the body, I shall never desire to take food for the pleasure of the palate. I shall further realise that if I have any desire to eat things because they are tasty, and apart from hunger or the thought of sustaining the body, it is a token of disease and I should seek to cure myself of it and not satisfy it as if it was lawful or healthy. Even so if I am quite clear that the sexual act, apart from the un-

questioned desire for progeny, is unlawful and detrimental to the body, mind and soul, surely resistance to the desire will become easy—far easier than when I am not clear whether the gratification of mere desire is or is not lawful and beneficial. If I am quite clear about the unlawfulness of the desire, I shall treat it as if it were a disease and repel its attacks with all my vigour. I shall feel the stronger for the resistance. They are wrong, even untruthful, who claim that they do not like the act but are helpless and therefore resistance leaves them weak and defeated. If all such people were to examine themselves, they would discover that their thoughts deceive them. Their thoughts cherish the desire, and their speech is a false interpreter of their thoughts. If on the other hand the speech is a true interpreter of the thoughts, there can be no such thing as weakness. Defeat there may be. Weakness never.

The correspondent's objection to procreation by unhealthy parents is perfectly valid. They can have or should have no desire for progeny. They are deceiving themselves and the world if they say that they perform the sexual act for progeny. In an examination of any subject truthfulness is always assumed. Desire for progeny must not be feigned in order to cover the pleasure of sexual union.—*H*. 24-4-1937.

* * *

Child's First Five Years

We labour under a sort of superstition, that the child has nothing to learn during the first five years of its life. On the contrary the fact is, that the child never

learns in after life what it does in its first five years.

The education of the child begins with conception. The physical and mental states of the parents are reproduced in the baby. There during the period of pregnancy it continues to be affected by the mother's moods, desires and temperament, as also by her ways of life.

After birth the child imitates the parents and for a considerable number of years entirely depends on them for its growth.

The couple who realises these things will never have sexual union for the fulfilment of their lust, but will unite only when they desire issue. I think it is the height of ignorance to believe, that the sexual act is an independent function necessary like sleeping or eating.

The world depends for its existence on the act of generation, and as the world is the play-ground of God and a reflection of His glory, the act of generation should be controlled for the ordered growth of the world.

He who realises this, will control his lust at any cost, will equip himself with the knowledge necessary for the physical, mental and spiritual well-being of his progeny, and give the benefit of that knowledge to posterity.—*S.M.E.T.* Vol. I. p. 473.

IX. AVOIDABLE MISERY

The marriage ceremony is one long-drawn on agony of feasting and frivolity. The householder's life is in keeping with the past life. It is a prolongation of self-indulgence. Holidays and social enjoyments are so arranged as to allow the greatest latitude for sensuous living.—M. K. G.

From a correspondent's long letter of wail I take the following :

> "I am a schoolmaster (aged 67) with life-long service (46 years) in the educational line born of a poor but highly respectable Kayastha family in Bengal which knew better days but is now reduced to poverty. I am blessed (?) with seven daughters and two sons ; the eldest son aged 20 died in October last leaving behind him his miserable and helpless parents to mourn his loss ! He was a promising youth—the only hope of my life. Of my seven daughters five have already been given in marriage. My sixth and seventh daughters (aged 18 and 16) are yet unmarried. My younger son is a minor aged 11 years. My pay is Rs. 60. It hardly allows me to make the two ends meet. I have no savings. I have less than nothing, being in debt. The match of my sixth daughter has been settled. The cost of the marriage will be not less than Rs. 900 in ornaments and dowry (Rs. 300). I have a life policy in the Sun Life Assurance of Canada for Rs. 2,000. The policy was issued in 1914. The Company has agreed to give me a loan of Rs. 400 only. It is only half the amount required. I am absolutely

helpless in respect of the other half. Could you not help this poor father with the other half ?"

This letter is one out of many such. The majority of letters are written in Hindi. But we know that English education has made things no better for parents of daughters. In some cases they have become worse in that the market price of possible young men who would suit an English educated daughter of an English educated father suffers an appreciable increase.

In a case like the Bengali father's the best help that can be rendered is not a loan or a gift of the required sum, but it should consist in persuading and strengthening the parent to refuse to purchase a match for his daughter but choose or let the daughter choose one who would marry her for love, not for money. This means a voluntary extension of the field of choice. There must be a breach in the double wall of caste and province. If India is one and indivisible, surely there should be no artificial divisions creating innumerable little groups which would neither interdine nor intermarry. There is no religion in this cruel custom. It would not do to plead that individuals cannot make the commencement and that they must wait till the whole society is ripe for the change. No reform has ever been brought about except through intrepid individuals breaking down inhuman customs or usages. And after all what hardships can the schoolmaster suffer if he and his daughters refused to treat marriage as a marketable transaction instead of a status or a sacrament which it undoubtedly is. I would, therefore, advise my correspondent courageously

to give up the idea of borrowing or begging and to save the four hundred rupees he can get on his life policy by choosing in consultation with his daughter a suitable husband no matter to what caste or province he belongs.

H. 25-7-1936.

X. WHAT A GIRL NEEDS

It is our misfortune that the sordidness of exacting a price for marrying a girl is not regarded as a disqualification. An altogether artificial value is put upon English collegiate education. It covers a multitude of sins.

—M. K. G.

A fair correspondent writes :

"Your article 'Avoidable Misery' seems to me to be incomplete. Why should parents insist on marrying their daughters and for that reason undergo nameless difficulties ? If parents were to educate their daughters as they educate their sons, so as to enable them to earn an independent living, they won't have to worry themselves over the selection of husbands for their daughters. My own experience is that when girls have had the opportunity of developing their minds fairly and are able to support themselves in a dignified manner, they have no difficulty, when they are desirous of marrying, in being suitably matched. I must not be understood to be advocating what is called higher education for our girls. I know it is not possible for thousands of girls. What I plead for is a training of girls in useful knowledge and some calling that would make them fully confident about their ability to face the world and not to feel dependent upon parents or their future husbands. Indeed I know some girls who, having been deserted by their husbands, are today living a dignified life with their husbands, because during the period of their desertion they had the good fortune to become self-dependent and

to receive a general training. I wish you could emphasize this aspect of the question in considering the difficulties of parents having on their hands daughters of marriageable age ! !"

I heartily endorse the sentiments expressed by my correspondent. Only I had to deal with the case of a parent who had made himself miserable not because he had an incompetent daughter, but because he and perhaps even his daughter wanted to restrict themselves, in the choice of a husband, to their own little caste. The 'accomplishment' of the girl was itself a hindrance in this case. If the girl was illiterate, she could have accommodated herself to any young man. But being an accomplished girl, naturally she would need an equally 'accomplished' husband. It is our misfortune that the sordidness of exacting a price for marrying a girl is not regarded as a decided disqualification. An altogether artificial value is put upon English collegiate education. It covers a multitude of sins. If the definition of 'accomplishment' was more sensible than it has become among the classes whose educated young men exact a price for accepting marriage proposals on behalf of girls, the difficulty of selecting suitable matches for girls would be much lessened, if not entirely removed. Whilst therefore I commend the proposal of my fair correspondent to the attention of parents, I must insist on the necessity of breaking down the highly injurious caste barriers. Breaking down the barriers will widen the range of choice and thus in a great measure prevent exactions.—*H*. 5-9-1936.

XI. MY MARRIED LIFE

My Mahatmaship is worthless. It is due to my outward activities, due to my politics which is the least part of me and is therefore evanescent. What is of abiding worth is my insistence on truth, non-violence and Brahmacharya, which is the real part of me. That permanent part of me, however small, is not to be despised. It is my all. I prize even the failures and disillusionments which are but steps towards success.—M. K. G.

I have practised Brahmacharya for over thirty years with considerable success though living in the midst of activities. After the decision to lead the life of a Brahmachari there was little change in my outward practice, except with my wife. In the course of my work among the Indians in South Africa, I mixed freely with women. There was hardly an Indian woman in the Transvaal and Natal whom I did not know. They were so many sisters and daughters to me. My Brahmacharya was not derived from books. I evolved my own rules for my guidance and that of those who, at my invitation, had joined me in the experiment. If I have not followed the prescribed instructions, much less have I accepted the description found even in religious literature of woman as the source of all evil and temptation. Owing as I do all the good there may be in me to my mother, I have looked upon woman, never as an object for satisfaction of sexual desire, but always with the veneration

due to my own mother. Man is the tempter and aggressor. It is not woman whose touch defiles man but he is often himself too impure to touch her. But recently a doubt has seized me as to the nature of the limitations that a Brahmachari or Brahmacharini should put upon himself or herself regarding contacts with the opposite sex. I have set limitations which do not satisfy me. What they should be I do not know. I am experimenting. I have never claimed to have been a perfect Brahmachari of my definition. I have not acquired that control over my thoughts that I need for my researches in non-violence. If my non-violence is to be contagious and infectious, I must acquire greater control over my thoughts.—*H*. 23-7-1938.

A Confession

I have no secrets of my own in this life. I have owned my weaknesses. If I were sensually inclined, I would have the courage to make the confession. It was when I developed detestation of sensual connection even with my own wife and had sufficiently tested myself that I took the vow of brahmacharya in 1906, and that for the sake of better dedication to the service of the country. From that day began my open life. I do not remember having ever slept or remained with my own wife or other women with closed doors except for the occasions referred to in my writings in *Young India* and *Navajivan*. Those were black nights with me. But as I have said repeatedly God has saved me in spite of myself. I claim no credit for any virtue that I may

possess. He is for me the Giver of all good and has saved me for His service.

From that day when I began Brahmacharya, our freedom began. My wife became a free woman, free from my authority as her lord and master, and I became free from my slavery to my own appetite which she had to satisfy. No other woman had any attraction for me in the same sense that my wife had. I was too loyal to her as husband and too loyal to the vow I had taken before my mother to be slave to any other woman. But the manner in which my Brahmacharya came to me irresistibly drew me to woman as the mother of man. She became too sacred for sexual love. And so every woman at once became sister or daughter to me. I had enough women about me at Phoenix. Several of them were my own relations whom I had enticed to South Africa. Others were co-workers' wives or relatives. Among these were the Wests and other Englishmen. The Wests included West, his sister, his wife, and his mother-in-law who had become the Granny of the little settlement.

As has been my wont, I could not keep the new good thing to myself. So I presented brahmacharya for the acceptance of all the settlers. All approved of it. And some took it up and remained true to the ideal.

My Brahmacharya knew nothing of the orthodox law governing its observance. I framed my own rules as occasion necessitated. But I have never believed that all contact with woman was to be shunned for the due observance of Brahmacharya. That restraint which

demands abstention from all contact, no matter how innocent, with the opposite sex is a forced growth, having little or no vital value. Therefore natural contacts for service were never restrained. And I found myself enjoying the confidences of many sisters, European and Indian, in South Africa. And when I invited the Indian sisters in South Africa to join the civil resistance movement, I found myself one of them. I discovered that I was specially fitted to serve womankind. To cut the (for me enthralling) story short, my return to India found me in no time one with India's women. The easy access I had to their hearts was an agreeable revelation to me. Muslim sisters never kept purdah before me here even as they did not in South Africa. I sleep in the Ashram surrounded by women for they feel safe with me in every respect. It should be remembered that there is no privacy in the Sevagaon Ashram.

If I were sexually attracted towards women, I have courage enough, even at this time of life, to become a polygamist. I do not believe in free love—secret or open. Free open love I have looked upon as dog's love. Secret love is besides cowardly.—*H.* 4-11-1939.

Part III

BIRTH CONTROL

I. BIRTH CONTROL

Every husband and wife can make a fixed resolution never to share the same room or the same bed at night, and to avoid sexual contact, except for the one surpeme purpose for which it is intended for both man and beast. The beast observes the law invariably. Man having got the choice has greivously erred in making the wrong choice. Every woman can decline to have anything to do with contraception. Both man and woman should know that abstention from satisfaction of the sexual appetite results not in disease but in health and vigour, provided that mind co-operates with the body.—M. K. G.

It is not without the greatest hesitation and reluctance that I approach this subject. The question of using artificial methods for birth control has been referred to me by correspondents ever since my return to India. Though I have answered them personally, I have never hitherto dealt with the subject publicly. My attention was drawn to the subject, now thirty-five years ago, when I was a student in England. There was then a hot controversy ranging between a purist who would not countenance anything but natural means and a doctor who advocated artificial means. It was at that early time in my life that I became, after leanings for a brief period towards artificial means, a convinced opponent of them. I now observe that in some Hindu papers the methods are described in a revoltingly open manner

which shocks one's sense of decency. I observe, too, that one writer does not hesitate to cite my name as among the supporters of artificial methods of birth control. I cannot recall a single occasion when I spoke or wrote in favour of such methods. I have seen also two distinguished names having been used in support. I hesitate to publish them without reference to their owners.

There can be no two opinions about the necessity of birth control. But the only method handed down from ages past is self-control or Brahmacharya. It is an infallible sovereign remedy doing good to those who practise it. And medical men will earn the gratitude of mankind, if instead of devising artificial means of birth control they will find out the means of self-control. The union is meant not for pleasure but for bringing forth progeny. And union is a crime when the desire for progeny is absent.

Artificial methods are like putting a premium upon vice. They make man and woman reckless. And respectability that is being given to the methods must hasten the dissolution of the restraints that public opinion puts upon one. Adoption of artificial methods must result in imbecility and nervous prostration. The remedy will be found to be worse than the disease. It is wrong and immoral to seek to escape the consequences of one's acts. It is good for a person who over-eats to have an ache and a fast. It is bad for him to indulge his appetite and then escape the consequences by taking tonics or other medicine. It is still worse for a person to indulge

his animal passions and escape the consequences of his acts. Nature is relentless and will have full revenge for any such violation of her laws. Moral results can only be produced by moral restraints. All other restraints defeat the very purpose for which they are intended. The reasoning underlying the use of artificial methods is that indulgence is a necessity of life. Nothing can be more fallacious. Let those who are eager to see the births regulated explore the lawful means devised by the ancients, and try to find out how they can be revived. An enormous amount of spade-work lies in front of them. Early marriages are a fruitful source of adding to the population. The present mode of life has also a great deal to do with the evil of unchecked procreation. If those causes are investigated and dealt with, society will be morally elevated. If they are ignored by impatient zealots, and if artificial methods become the order of the day, nothing but moral degradation can be the result.

A society that has already become enervated through a variety of causes will become still further enervated by the adoption of artificial methods. Those men therefore who are light-heartedly advocating artificial methods cannot do better than study the subject afresh, stay their injurious activity and popularise Brahmacharya both for the married and the unmarried. That is the only noble and straight method of birth control.

—*Y.I.* 12-3-1925.

II. THE LAW OF LIFE

It is my firm belief that the strength of the soul grows in proportion as you subdue the flesh.—M. K. G.

My article on birth control has, as was to be expected, given rise to energetic correspondence in favour of artificial methods...

Let me clear the ground by saying that I have not written for *sannyasis* or as a *sannyasi*. I do not claim to be one in the accepted sense of the term. My observations are based upon unbroken personal practice with a slight aberration for a period of twenty-five years and that of those who have joined me in the experiment for a long enough period to warrant certain conclusions. In the experiment both young and old men and women are included. I claim a certain degree of scientific accuracy for the experiment. It has undoubtedly a strictly moral basis, but it originated in the desire for birth-control. My own case was peculiarly for that purpose. Tremendous moral consequences developed as an afterthought though in a perfectly natural sequence. I venture to claim that by judicious treatment it is possible to observe self-control without much difficulty. Indeed it is a claim put forth not merely by me but German and other Nature-cure practitioners. The latter teach that water treatment or earth compresses and a non-heating and chiefly fruitarian diet soothe the nervous system and bring animal passions under easy subjection whilst they

at the same time invigorate the system. The same result is claimed by *rajayogis* for scientifically regulated *pranayama* without reference to the higher practices. Neither the Western nor the ancient Indian treatment is intended for the *sannyasi* but essentially for the householder. If it is contended that birth control is necessary for the nation because of over-population, I dispute the proposition. It has never been proved. In my opinion, by a proper land system, better agriculture and a supplementary industry, this country is capable of supporting twice as many people as there are in it today. But I have joined hands with the advocates of birth control in India from the standpoint of the present political condition of the country.

I do suggest that men must cease to indulge their animal passions after the need for progeny has ceased. The remedy of self-control can be made popular and effective. It has never had a trial with the educated class. That class has not yet, thanks to the joint-family system, felt the pressure. Those that have have not given a thought to the moral issues involved in the question. Save for stray lectures on Brahmacharya no systematic propaganda has been carried on for advocating self-control for the definite purpose of limiting progeny. On the contrary the superstition of a larger family being an auspicious thing and therefore desirable still persists. Religious teachers do not generally teach that restriction of progeny in given circumstances is as much a religious obligation as procreation may be under certain other circumstances.

I am afraid that advocates of birth control take it for granted that indulgence in animal passion is a necessity of life and in itself a desirable thing. The solicitude shown for the fair sex is most pathetic. In my opinion it is an insult to the fair sex to put up her case in support of birth control by artificial methods. As it is, man has sufficiently degraded her for his lust, and artificial methods, no matter how well-meaning the advocates may be, will still further degrade her. I know that there are modern women who advocate these methods. But I have little doubt that the vast majority of women will reject them as inconsistent with their dignity. If man means well by her, let him exercise control over himself. It is not she who tempts. In reality man being the aggressor is the real culprit and the tempter.

I urge the advocates of artificial methods to consider the consequences. Any large use of the methods is likely to result in the dissolution of the marriage bond and in free love. If a man may indulge in animal passion for the sake of it, what is he to do whilst he is, say, away from his home for any length of time, or when he is engaged as a soldier in a protracted war, or when he is widowed, or when his wife is too ill to permit him the indulgence without injury to her health notwithstanding the use of artificial method ?

* * *

I hope I have given enough illustrations to show that self-restraint and not indulgence must be regarded as the law of life, if we are to accept and retain the

sanctity of the marriage tie. I have not begged the question, for I do contend that artificial methods, however proper they may be, are harmful. They are harmful not perhaps in themselves but because they increase the appetite which grows with every feed. The mind that is so tuned as to regard indulgence not only lawful but even desirable will simply feed itself on the indulgence, and will at last become so weak as to lose all strength of will. I do maintain that every act of indulgence means loss of precious vitality so needful to keep a man or woman strong in body,mind and soul. Though I have now mentioned the soul, I have purposely eliminated it from the discussion which is intended merely to combat the arguments advanced by my correspondents who seem to disregard its existence. The tuition that is needed for much married and enervated India is not that of indulgence with artificial means but complete restraint, if only for the sake of regaining lost vitality. Let the immoral medicines whose advertisements disfigure our press be a warning to the advocates of birth control. It is not prudery or false modesty which restrains me from discussing the subject. The restraining force in the certain knowledge that the devitalised and enervated youth of the country fall an easy prey to the specious arguments advanced in favour of indulgence.

It is perhaps now hardly necessary for me to combat the medical certificate produced by the second correspondent. It is wholly irrelevant to my case. I neither affirm nor deny that proper artificial methods injure the organs or produce sterility. No array, however brilliant,

of medical men can disprove the ruin which I have witnessed of hundreds of youths who have indulged their passions even though it may be with their own wives.

I may be wholly wrong. My conclusions may be based on false data. But the advocates of artificial methods have need to be patient. They have no data at all except the modern examples. Surely it is too early to predict anything with any degree of certainty of a system of control which on the face of it seems to be repugnant to the moral sense of mankind. It is easy enough to trifle with youthful nature. It will be difficult to undo the evil effects of such trifling.—*Y.I.* 2-4-1925.

III. TWO BIRTH CONTROL ENTHUSIASTS

This little globe of ours is not a toy of yesterday. It has not suffered from the weight of over-population through its age of countless millions. How can it be that the truth has suddenly dawned upon some people that it is in danger of perishing of shortage of food unless birth-rate is checked through the use of contraceptives.—M. K. G.

(The following are extracts from Shri Mahadev Desai's report of the conversations which Mrs. Margaret Sanger, the famous leader of the Birth Control Movement, had with Gandhiji at Wardha.)

Gandhiji poured his whole being into his conversation. He revealed himself inside out, giving Mrs. Sanger an intimate glimpse of his own private life. He also declared to her his own limitations, especially the stupendous limitation of his own philosophy of life—a philosophy that seeks self-realization through self-control, and said that from *him* there could be one solution and one alone. "I could not recommend the remedy of birth control to a woman who wanted my approval. I should simply say to her: My remedy is of no use to you. You must go to others for advice." Mrs. Sanger cited some hard cases. "I agree," said Gandhiji, "there are hard cases. Else birth control enthusiasts would have no case. But I would say, do devise remedies by all means, but the remedies should be other than the

ones you advise. If you and I as moral reformers put our foot down on this remedy and said, 'You must fall back on other remedies,' those would surely be found." Both seemed to be agreed that woman should be emancipated, that woman should be the arbiter of her destiny. But Mrs. Sanger would have Gandhiji work for woman's emancipation through her pet device, just as believers in violence want Gandhiji to win India's freedom through violence, since they seem to be sure that non-violence can never succeed.

She forgets this fundamental difference in her impatience to prove that Gandhiji does not know the women of India. And she claims to prove this on the ground that he makes an impossible appeal to the women of India—the appeal to resist their husbands. Well, this is what he said : "My wife I made the orbit of all women. In her I studied all women. I came in contact with many European women in South Africa, and I knew practically every Indian woman there. I worked with them. I tried to show them they were not slaves either of their husbands or parents, not only in the political field but in the domestic as well. But the trouble was that some could not resist their husbands. The remedy is in the hands of women themselves. The struggle is difficult for them, and I do not blame them. I blame the men. Men have legislated against them. Man has regarded woman as his tool. She has learned to be his tool and in the end found it easy and pleasurable to be such, because when one drags another in his fall the descent is easy...I have felt that during the years still

left to me if I can drive home to women's minds the truth that they are free, we will have no birth control problem in India. If they will only learn to say 'no' to their husbands when they approach them carnally, I do not suppose all husbands are brutes, and if women only know how to resist them, all will be well. I have been able to teach women who have come in contact with me how to resist their husbands. The real problem is that many do not want to resist them...No resistance bordering upon bitterness will be necessary in ninty-nine out of hundred cases. If a wife says to her husband, 'No, I do not want it," he will make no trouble. But she hasn't been taught. Her parents in most cases won't teach it to her. There are some cases, I know, in which parents have appealed to their daughters' husbands not to force motherhood on their daughters. And I have come across amenable husbands too. I want woman to learn the primary right of resistance. She thinks now that she has not got it."

The distinction that Gandhiji drew between love and lust will be evident from the following extracts from the conversation :

G.: When both want to satisfy animal passion without having to suffer the consequences of their act it is not love, it is lust. But if love is pure, it will transcend animal passion and will regulate itself. We have not had enough education of the passions. When a husband says, "Let us not have children, but let us have relations," what is that but animal passion ? If they do not want to have more children, they should simply

refuse to unite. Love becomes lust the moment you make it a means for the satisfaction of animal needs. It is just the same with food. If food is taken only for pleasure, it is lust. You do not take chocolates for the sake of satisfying your hunger. You take them for pleasure and then ask the doctor for an antidote. Perhaps you will tell the doctor that whisky befogs your brain and he gives you an antidote. Would it not be better not to take chocolates or whisky ?

Mrs. S.: No. I do not accept the analogy.

G.: Of course you will not accept the analogy because you think this sex expression without desire for children is a need of the soul, a contention I do not endorse.

Mrs. S.: Yes, sex expression is a spiritual need and I claim that the quality of this expression is more important than the result, for the quality of the relationship is there regardless of results. We all know that the great majority of children are born as an accident without the parents having any desire for conception. Seldom are two people drawn together in the sex act by their desire to have children...Do you think it possible for two people who are in love, who are happy together, to regulate their sex act only once in two years, so that relationship would only take place when they wanted a child ? Do you think it possible ?

G.: I had the honour of doing that very thing and I am not the only one.

Mrs. Sanger thought it was illogical to contend that sex union for the purpose of having children would be

love and union for the satisfaction of the sexual appetite was lust, for the same act was involved in both. Gandhiji immediately capitulated and said he was ready to describe all sexual union as partaking of the nature of lust. He made the whole thing abundantly clear by citing facts from his own life. "I know," he said, "from my own experience that as long as I looked upon my wife carnally, we had no real understanding. Our love did not reach a high plane. There was affection between us always, but we came closer and closer the more we or rather I became restrained. There never was want of restraint on the part of my wife. Very often she would show restraint, but she rarely resisted me although she showed disinclination very often. All the time I wanted carnal pleasure I could not serve her. The moment I bade good-bye to a life of carnal pleasure our whole relationship became spiritual. Lust died and love reigned instead."

"Must the sexual union take place only three or four times in an entire lifetime ?" she asked.

"Why should people not be taught," replied Gandhiji, "that it is immoral to have more than three or four children and that after they have had that number they should sleep separately ? If they are taught this, it would harden into custom. And if social reformers cannot impress this idea upon the people, why not a law ? If husband and wife have four children, they would have had sufficient animal enjoyment. Their love may then be lifted to a higher plane. Their bodies have met. After they have had the children they

wanted, their love transforms itself into a spiritual relationship. If these children die and they want more, then they may meet again. Why must people be slaves of this passion when they are not of others ? When you give them education in birth control, you tell them it is a duty. You say to them that if they do not do this thing they will interrupt their spiritual evolution. You do not even talk of regulation. After giving them education in birth control you do not say to them 'thus far and no further.' You ask people to drink temperately, as though it was possible to remain temperate. I know these temperate people."—*H*. 22-2-1936.

Creation of A New Life

(The following are extracts from Shri Mahadev Desai's report of an interview which Mrs. How-Martyn, the birth control enthusiast from London, had with Gandhiji.)

"You seem to regard a beautiful function as something objectionable. Two animals are nearest to the divine when they are going to create new life. There is something very beautiful in the act."

"The creation of a new life is nearest the divine, I agree. All I want is that one should approach that act in a divine way. That is to say, man and woman must come together with no other desire than that of creating a new life. But if they come together merely to have a fond embrace, they are nearest the devil. Man unfortunately forgets that he is nearest the divine, hankers

after the brute instinct in himself and becomes less than the brute."

"But why must you cast aspersion on the brute?"

"I do not. The brute fulfils the law of his own nature. The lion in his majesty is a noble creature and he has a perfect right to eat me up, but I have none to develop paws and pounce upon you. Then I lower myself and become worse than the brute."

"I am sorry," said Mrs. How-Martyn, "I have expressed myself very badly. I confess that in a majority of cases it is not going to be their salvation, but a factor which will conduct to higher life. You understand what I mean, though I am afraid I have not been able to make myself quite clear."

"Oh, no. I do not want to take any undue advantage of you. But I want you to understand my viewpoint. Do not run away with misconceptions. Man must choose either of the two courses, the upward or the downward, but as he has the brute in him, he will more easily choose the downward course than the upward, especially when the downward course is presented to him in a beautiful garb. Man easily capitulates when sin is presented in the garb of virtue, and that is what Marie Stopes and others are doing. If I were to popularise the religion of indulgence, I know that men would simply clutch at it. I know that, if people like you in selfless zeal cried themselves hoarse upholding your doctrine, you might even ride to apparent victory, but I also know that you will ride to certain death, ofcourse totally unconscious of the mischief you are doing.

The downward instinct requires no advocacy, no argument. It is there embodied in them, and unless you regulate and control it, there is danger of disease and pestilence."—*H*. 1-2-1935.

IV. SELF-CONTROL *V.* CONTRACEPTIVES

If we begin to believe that indulgence in animal passion is necessary, harmless and sinless, we shall want to give reins to it and shall be powerless to resist it. Whereas if we educate ourselves to believe that such indulgence is harmful, sinful, unnecessary, and can be controlled, we shall discover that self-restraint is perfectly possible.

—M. K. G.

Birth control by contraceptives and the like is a profound error. I write thus with a full sense of my responsibility. I have great regard for Mrs. Margaret Sanger and her followers. She impressed me much by her great zeal for her cause. I know that she has great sympathy for the women who suffer because they have to bear the burden of carrying and rearing unwanted children. I know also that this method of birth control has the support of many Protestant divines, scientists, learned men and doctors, many of whom I have the honour of knowing personally and for whom I entertain high regard. But I should be false to my God who is Truth and nothing but Truth, if I concealed my belief from the reader or these great advocates of the method. Indeed, if I hid my belief, I should never discover my error—if my present belief is one. Moreover its declaration is due to those many men and women who accept my guidance and advice in many moral problems including this one concerning birth control.

That birth requires to be regulated and controlled is common cause between me and the advocates of contraceptives and the like. The difficulty of control through self-restraint is not to be denied. Yet there is no other way of attaining the end if mankind is to fulfil its destiny. It is my innermost conviction that if the method under discussion gains universal acceptance, mankind will suffer moral deterioration. This I say in spite of the evidence to the contrary that is often produced by the advocates of the method.

I believe I have no superstition in me. Truth is not truth merely because it is ancient. Nor is it necessarily to be regarded with suspicion because it is ancient. There are some fundamentals of life which may not be lightly given up because they are difficult of enforcement in one's life.

Birth control through self-control is no doubt difficult. But no one has yet been known seriously to dispute its efficacy and even superiority over the use of contraceptives.

Then, I feel that the full acceptance of the implication of the injunction of the shastras as to the strictly confined use of the sexual act, makes the observance of self-control much easier than if one regards the act itself as a source of supreme enjoyment. The function of the organs of generation is merely to generate progeny obviously of the highest type possible for a married couple. This can and should only take place when both parties desire, not sexual union but progeny which is the result of such union. Desire for such union, therefore,

without the desire for progeny, must be considered unlawful and should be restrained.—*H.* 14-3-1936.

A Sister's Challenge

> "Your recent articles on self-control have created quite a stir. Persons who are in sympathy with your views find it difficult to exercise self-control for any length of time. They argue that you are applying your own experience and practice to the whole mankind. And even you have admitted that you do not fulfil the definition of a complete brahmachari. For you yourself are not free from animal passion. And since you admit the necessity of limiting the number of children a married couple may have, the use of contraceptives is the only practical method open to the vast majority of mankind."
>
> Thus writes a correspondent.

I have admitted my own limitations. In this matter of self-control *v.* contraceptives, they constitute my qualifications. For my limitations show quite clearly that I am like the majority of earth earthy and can have no pretensions to any extraordinary gifts. The motive for my self-control was also quite ordinary, viz. the desire to limit the progeny for the purpose of serving the country or humanity. Inability to support a large family should be a greater incentive than the very distant one of serving one's country or humanity. That in spite of thirty-five years of successful (from the present standpoint) self-control the animal in me still needs watching, shows in an eminent degree that I am very much an ordinary mortal. I therefore do suggest that

what has been possible for me is possible for any human being who would make the required effort.

My quarrel with the advocates of contraceptives lies in their taking it for granted that ordinary mortals cannot exercise self-control. Some of them even go so far as to say that even if they can, they ought not to do so. To them, no matter how eminent they may be in their own spheres, I say, in all humility but with utmost confidence, that they are talking without experience of the possibilities of self-control. They have no right to limit the capacity of the human soul. In such instances the positive evidence of one person like me, if it is reliable, is not only of greater value but decisive. To dismiss my evidence as useless because I am popularly regarded as a 'Mahatma,' is not proper in a serious inquiry.

Far more weighty is the argument of a sister who says in effect: "We, the advocates of contraceptives, have come on the scene only recently. You self-controllers had the field all to yourselves all these long generations,—maybe thousands of years. What have you to show to your credit? Has the world learnt the lesson of self-control? What have you done to stop the misery of overburdened families? Have you heard the cry of wounded motherhood? Come, the field is even now open to you. We do not mind your advocacy of self-control. We may even wish you success, if perchance you save wives from the unwanted approaches of their husbands. But why should you seek to decry the methods which we employ, and which take note of

and make every allowance for common human weaknesses or habits, and which when properly employed almost never fail to accomplish their purpose ?"

The taunt is dictated by the anguish of a sister filled with compassion for the families that are always in want because of the ever-increasing number of children. The appeal of human misery has been known to melt hearts of stone. How can it fail to affect high-souled sisters ? But such appeals may easily lead one astray, if one is lifted off one's feet and, like a drowning man, catches any floating straw.

We are living in times when values are undergoing quick changes. We are not satisfied with slow results. We are satisfied with the welfare merely of our own caste-fellows, not even of our own country. We feel or want to feel for the whole of humanity. All this is a tremendous gain in humanity's march towards its goal.

But we won't find the remedy for human ills by losing patience and by rejecting everything that is old because it is old. Our ancestors also dreamt, perhaps vaguely, the same dreams that fire us with zeal. The remedies they applied for similar ills, it is possible, are applicable even to the horizon that appears to have widened beyond expectations.

And my plea based on positive experience is that even as truth and ahimsa are not merely for the chosen few but for the whole of humanity to be practised in daily life, so exactly is self-control not merely for a few 'Mahatmas' but for the whole of humanity. And even as because many people will be untruthful and violent,

humanity may not lower its standard, so also though many, even the majority, may not respond to the message of self-control, we may not lower our standard.

A wise judge will not give a wrong decision in the face of a hard case. He will allow himself to appear to have hardened his heart because he knows that truest mercy lies in not making bad law.

We may not attribute the weaknesses of the perishable body or the flesh to the imperishable soul that resides in it. We have to regulate the body in the light of the laws that govern the soul. In my humble opinion, these laws are few and unchangeable, capable of being understood and followed by the whole of the human family. There would be differences of degree but not of kind in their application. If we have faith, we won't lose it, because it may take a million years before humanity realises or makes the nearest or visible approach to its goal. In Jawaharlal's language, let us have the correct ideology.

The sister's challenge, however, remains to be answered. The 'self-controllers' are not idle. They are carrying on their propaganda. If their method is different in kind from the method of contraceptives, so is and must be their propaganda. 'Self-controllers' do not need clinics. They cannot advertise their cure for the simple reason that it is not an article to be sold or given. But their criticism of contraceptives and warning to the people against their use is part of their propaganda. The constructive side has always been there, but naturally in an unfelt and unseen manner. Advocacy of self-

control has never been suspended. The most effective is that of example. The larger the number of honest persons who practise successful self-control, the more effective becomes the propaganda.—*H*. 30-5-1936.

V. FOR CONTRACEPTIVES

I think artificial birth control or birth control according to methods suggested today and recommended in the West is suicidal. When I say 'suicidal,' I do not mean resulting in the extinction of the race, I mean suicidal in a higher sense of the term, that is to say these methods make man lower than the brute; they are immoral.—M. K. G.

A correspondent writes :

"I would like to say a few words on the report of the interview between Mrs. Sanger and Mahatma Gandhi that appeared recently in the *Harijan*.

The cardinal fact that I see missed in the interview is that it has not been taken into consideration that man is above all an artist and a creator. He is not satisfied with bare necessity, but must have beauty, colour and charm as well. 'If ye have one pice only, buy bread of it; if two, one worth of bread and worth of flower,'—said Prophet Muhammad. In it is embodied a great psychological truth —the truth that man is by nature an artist. That is why we find him engaged in making his raiment something more than the mere necessity of sustaining his body. He has made every necessity into an art and has spent tons of blood on them. His creative instinct impels him to add to his difficulties and problems and solve them over again. He *cannot* be 'simple' as Rousseau, Ruskin, Tolstoy, Thoreau and Gandhiji would like him to be. War he must have as its necessary corollary which also he has transformed into a great art.

To appeal to him the example of nature would

be in vain, for it is totally incompatible with his very being. 'Nature' *cannot* be his teacher. Those who appeal to it overlook that it does not only consist of hills and dales and flower-beds, but flood, cyclone and earthquake as well. 'From an artistic standpoint,' says Nietzsche the iconoclast, 'Nature is no model. It exaggerates, distorts and leaves gaps. Nature is the *accident*. To study 'from nature' seems to me a bad sign ; thus lying in the dust before trivial facts is unworthy of a thorough artist. To see what is the function of another order of intellects, the *anti-artistic*, the matter-of-fact, one must know *who* one is !' We know that the wild beasts eat raw flesh out of the need of sustaining their bodies and not out of taste. We also know of the rutting season of nature outside which none meets sexually there. But, it is, to quote our philosopher again, 'unworthy of a thorough artist' that man by nature is. To end sexual life when the need of propagation is no longer there, or to enjoin sex-communion expressly with the desire of begetting offspring, is too calculating, too natural, too 'matter-of-fact' as our philosopher just now said, to appeal to his strong artistic taste. Hence he has got quite another aspect of sexual love which is independent of the desire to multiply as has been revealed by such authorities as Havelock Ellis and Marie Stopes, but which, though originating in the soul, is nevertheless incomplete without the bodily union, so long as we do not get the soul all by itself, but through the instrument of the body. To cope with the *effect* of such a union is altogether a different problem, and herein is the task of the birth control movement. But if the task be shifted to a rearrangement of the soul itself—for 'self-control' is nothing different from this—by external discipline, we are not sanguine that it would prove all the purposes that

are expected of it. Nor would the movement of control over birth without a firm psychological basis.

I would close with a further remark that by this I do not mean to underrate the value of the discipline of self-control or what is technically known as brahmacharya. I would always admire it as the art of the control of the sex instinct carried to perfection. But just as the perfection of other arts does not interfere with the *science* of life, with the *whole* life (in the Nietzschean sense of the term), with the proper scheme of all the values of life,—so also I will not allow the value of the ideal of brahmacharya *dominate* other values, far less use it as an *instrument* of solving problems, such as over-population. We have made such a hobglobin of it! We have heard of the 'war-babies.' Should we refuse giving credit to those soldiers who brought victory for their countrymen by their blood because they happened to give birth to those war-babies? Nobody would. I believe it was with an eye to such a scheme of values that the scriptures Prashnopanishad said, 'there is brahmacharya where sexual union occurs only at night (i.e. as opposed to abnormal cohabitation during the daytime). Here normal sex life itself is spoken of as brahmacharya, the rigid conception of which began after we had already topsy-turvied the proper scheme of all the values of life."

I gladly publish this letter as I should any such letter that is not full of declamation, abuse or insinuations. The reader should have both the sides of the question to enable him to come to a decision. I am myself eager to know why a thing which is claimed to be scientific and beneficial and which has many distinguished

supporters repels me notwithstanding my effort to see the bright side of it.

Thus it is not proved to my satisfaction that sexual union in marriage is in itself good and beneficial to the unionists. To the contrary effect I can bear ample testimony from my own experience and that of many friends. I am not aware of any of us having derived any benefit, mental, spiritual or physical. Momentary excitement and satisfaction there certainly was. But it was invariably followed by exhaustion. And the desire for union returned immediately the effect of exhaustion had worn out. Although I have always been a conscientious worker, I can clearly recall the fact that this indulgence interfered with my work. It was the consciousness of this limitation that put me on the track of self-restraint ; and I have no manner of doubt that the self-restraint is responsible for the comparative freedom from illnesses that I have enjoyed for long periods and for my output of energy and work both physical and mental which eye-witnesses have described as phenomenal.

I fear that the correspondent has misapplied his reading. Man is undoubtedly an artist and creator. Undoubtedly he must have beauty and therefore colour. His artistic and creative nature at its best taught him to see art in self-restraint and ugliness in uncreative union. His instinct for the artistic taught him to discriminate and to know that any conglomeration of colours was no mark of beauty, nor every sense enjoyment good in itself. His eye for art taught man to seek enjoyment in usefulness. Thus he learnt at an early stage of his evolution

that he was to eat not for its own sake as some of us still do, but that he should eat to enable him to live. At a later stage he learnt further that there was neither beauty nor joy in living for its own sake, but that he must live to serve his fellow-creatures and through them his Maker. Similarly, when he pondered over the phenomenon of the pleasurableness of sexual union, he discovered that, like every other organ of sense, this one of generation had its use and abuse. And he saw that its true function, its right use was to restrict it to generation. Any other use he saw was ugly, and he saw further that it was fraught with very serious consequences as well to the individual as to the race. It is hardly necessary for me to prolong the argument.

The correspondent says well that man makes art out of his necessities. Necessity is not only the mother of invention, it is the mother also of art. We should therefore beware of that art which has not necessity as its basis.

Nor may we dignify every want by the name of necessity. Man's estate is one of probation. During that period he is played upon by evil forces as well as good. He is ever prey to temptations. He has to prove his manliness by resisting and fighting temptations. He is no warrior who fights outside foes of his imagination and is powerless to lift his little finger against the innumerable foes within or, what is worse, mistakes them for friends. "War he must have." But the correspondent is wrong when he says that "as its necessary corollary he has transformed it into a great art." He

has hardly yet learnt the art of war. He has mistaken false war for true, even as our forefathers, under a mistaken view of sacrifice, instead of sacrificing their base passions, sacrificed innocent non-human fellow creatures as many even do at the present day. We have yet to learn the art of true war. Surely there is neither beauty nor art in what is going on today on the Abyssinian frontier. The correspondent has chosen unhappy (for him) names for his illustrations. Rousseau, Ruskin, Thoreau and Tolstoy were first class artists of their time. They will live even after many of us are dead, cremated and forgotten.

The correspondent seems to have misapplied the word nature. When an appeal to man is made to copy or study nature, he is not invited to follow what the reptiles do or even what the king of the forest does. He has to study man's nature at its best, i.e. I presume his regenerate nature, whatever it may be. Perhaps it requires considerable effort to know what regenerate nature is. It is dangerous now-a-days to refer to old teachers. I suggest to the correspondent that it is unnecessary to bring in Nietzsche or even Prashnopanishad. The question for me is past the stage of quotations. What has cold reason to say on the point under discussion ? Is it or is it not correct to say that the only right use of the generative organ is to confine it solely to generation and that any other use is its abuse ? If it is, no difficulty in achieving the right use and avoiding the wrong should baffle the scientific seeker.—*H*. 4-4-1936.

VI. SEX EDUCATION

The sex education that I stand for must have for its object the conquest and sublimation of the sex passion.

—M. K. G.

Sex complex is today steadily gaining ground in Gujarat as in the rest of India. And what is more, those who fall under its sway feel as if there is something meritorious about it. When a slave begins to take pride in his fetters and hugs them like precious ornaments, the triumph of the slave-owner is complete. But this success of cupid, spectacular though it may be, will, I am convinced, prove to be shortlived and ignoble, and at long last end in inanition, even like a scorpion whose venom is spent. But that does not mean that we can in the meantime afford to sit with folded hands. The certainty of its defeat need not, must not, lull us into a false sense of security. The conquest of lust is the highest endeavour of a man or woman's existence. Without overcoming lust man cannot hope to rule over self. And without rule over self there can be no Swaraj or *Ram Raj*. Rule of all without rule of oneself would prove to be as deceptive and disappointing as a painted toy-mango, charming to look at outwardly but hollow and empty within. No worker who has not overcome lust can hope to render any genuine service to the cause of Harijans, communal unity, khadi, cow-preservation or village reconstruction. Great causes like these cannot

be served by intellectual equipment alone ; they call for spiritual effort or soul force. Soul-force comes only through God's grace, and God's grace never descends upon a man who is a slave to lust.

What place has then instruction in sexual science in our educational system, or has it any place there at all ? Sexual science is of two kinds—that which is used for controlling or overcoming the sexual passion, and that which is used to stimulate and feed it. Instruction in the former is as necessary a part of a child's education as the latter is harmful and dangerous and fit therefore only to be shunned. All great religious have rightly regarded 'Kama' as the arch-enemy of man, anger or hatred coming only in the second place. According to the Gita, the latter is an offspring of the former. The Gita, ofcourse, uses the word 'Kama' in its wider sense of desire. But the same holds good of the narrow sense in which it is used here.

This, however, still leaves unanswered the question, i.e. whether it is desirable to impart to young pupils a knowledge about the use and function of generative organs. It seems to me that it is necessary to impart such knowledge to a certain extent. At present they are often left to pick up such knowledge anyhow with the result that they are misled into abusive practices. We cannot properly control or conquer the sexual passion by turning a blind eye to it. I am therefore strongly in favour of teaching young boys and girls the significance and right use of their generative organs. And in my own way I have tried to impart this knowledge to young

children of both sexes for whose training I was responsible.

But the sex education that I stand for must have for its object the conquest and sublimation of the sex passion. Such education should automatically serve to bring home to children the essential distinction between man and brute, to make them realise that it is man's special privilege and pride to be gifted with the faculties of head and heart both ; that he is a thinking no less than a feeling animal, as the very derivation of the word *manushya* shows, and to renounce the sovereignty of reason over the blind instincts is therefore to renounce a man's estate. In man reason quickens and guides the feeling, in brute the soul lies ever dormant. To awaken the heart is to awaken the dormant soul, to awaken reason, and to inculcate discrimination between good and evil.

Who should teach this true science of sex ? Clearly, he who has attained mastery over his passions. To teach astronomy and kindred sciences we have teachers who have gone through a course of training in them and are masters of their art. Even so must we have as teachers of sexual science, i.e. the science of sex-control, those who have studied it and have acquired mastery over self. Even a lofty utterance, that has not the backing of sincerity and experience, will be inert and lifeless, and will utterly fail to penetrate and quicken the hearts of men, while the speech that springs from self-realisation and genuine experience is always fruitful.

Today our entire environment—our reading, our thinking, our social behaviour—is generally calculated

to subserve and cater for the sex-urge. To break through its coils is no easy task. But it is a task worthy of our highest endeavour. Even if there are a handful of teachers endowed with practical experience, who accept the ideal of attaining self-control as the highest duty of man, and are fired by a genuine and undying faith in their mission, and are sleeplessly vigilant and active, their labour will light the path of the children of Gujarat, save the unwary from falling into the mire of sexuality, and rescue those who might be already engulfed in it.—*H*. 21-11-1936.

VII. THE COMMON BED

One of the things that sharply distinguishes man from beast is that man from his earliest age has recognised the sanctity of the marriage bond and regulated his life in connection with woman by way of self-restraint which he has more and more imposed upon himself.—M. K. G.

William R. Thurston, according to the publisher's note, was a Major in the United States Army, which he served for nearly ten years. And, during these years, he had varied experiments in several parts of the world, including China. During his travels, he studied the effects of marriage laws and customs, as a result of which he felt the call to write a book on marriage. This book, which is called *Thurston's Philosophy of Marriage* and was published last year by the Tiffany Press, New York, contains only 32 pages of bold type, and can be read inside of an hour. The author has not entered into an elaborate argument, but has simply set forth his conclusions which the publisher truly describes as 'startling.' In his foreword, the author claims to have based his conclusions on 'personal observation, data obtained from physicians, statistics of social hygiene and medical statistics,' compiled during the War. His conclusions are :

1. "That Nature never intended a woman to be bound to a man for life, and to be compelled to occupy the same bed or habitation with him,

night after night, in pregnancy and out, in order to earn her board and lodging, and to exercise her natural right to bear children.

2. "That the daily and nightly juxtaposition of the male and female, which is a result of present marriage laws and customs, leads to unrestrained sexual intercourse which perverts the natural instinct of both male and female, and makes partial prostitutes of ninety per cent of all married women. This condition arises from the fact, that married have been led to believe that such prostitution of themselves is right and natural because it is legal, and that it is necessary in order to retain the affections of their husbands."

The author, then, goes on to describe the effect of 'continual, unrestrained sexual intercourse,' which I epitomise as follows :

(*a*) "It causes the woman to become highly nervous, prematurely aged, diseased, irritable, restless, discontented and incapable of properly caring for her children."

(*b*) "Among the poorer classes, it leads to the propagation of many children who are not wanted."

(*c*) "Among the higher classes, unrestrained sexual intercourse leads to the practice of contraception and abortions." "*If contraceptive methods, under the name of 'birth control' or any other name, are taught to the women of the masses, the race will become generally diseased, demoralised, depraved, and will eventually perish.*" (The italics are the author's).

(*d*) "Excessive sexual intercourse drains the male of the vitality necessary for earning a good

living." "*At present there are approximately two million more widows in the United States than there are widowers. Comparatively few of these are War widows.*"

(*e*) "The excessive sexual intercourse, incident to the present married state, develops in the minds of both male and female a sense of futility." "*The poverty of the world today, and the slums of the larger cities are not due to lack of profitable labour to be performed, but to excessive, unrestrained sexual intercourse, resulting from present marriage laws.*"

(*f*) "Most serious of all, from the standpoint of the future of the human race, is sexual intercourse during pregnancy."

Then, follows an indictment of China and India, into which I need not go. This brings us to half of this booklet. The next half is devoted to the remedy.

The central fact of the remedy is, that husband and wife must always live in separate rooms, therefore, necessarily sleep in separate beds, and meet only when both desire progeny, but especially the wife. I do not intend to give the changes suggested in the marriage laws. The one thing common to all marriages throughout the world is a common room and a common bed, and this the author condemns in unmeasured terms, I venture to think, rightly.

There is no doubt that much of the sensuality of our nature, whether male or female, is due to the superstition bearing a religious sanction that married people are bound to share the same bed and the same room.

It has produced a mentality, the disastrous effect of

which it is difficult for us, living in the atmosphere generated by that superstition, properly to estimate.

The author is equally opposed, as we have already seen, to contraceptive methods.

Many of the other remedies, suggested by the author, are, in my opinion, not of practical use to us, and in any case, require legislative sanction. But every husband and wife can make a fixed resolution from today never to share the same room or the same bed at night and to avoid sexual contact, except for the one supreme purpose for which it is intended for both man and beast.

The beast observes the law invariably. Man having got the choice has grievously erred in making the wrong choice. Every woman can decline to have anything to do with contraception. Both man and woman should know that abstention from satisfaction of the sexual appetite results not in disease but in health and vigour, provided that mind cooperates with the body.

The author believes that the present condition of marriage laws 'is responsible for the greater part of all the ills of the world today.' One need not share this sweeping belief with the author to come to the two final decisions I have suggested. But there can be no doubt that a large part of the miseries of today can be avoided if we look at the relations between the sexes in a healthy and pure light, and regard ourselves as trustees for the moral welfare of the future generations.—*Y.I.* 27-9-1928.

Part IV

WOMAN'S ROLE

I. EQUAL RIGHTS FOR WOMEN

Socially men and women are inseparable members, supplying one another's deficiencies. Women are dubbed the 'weaker vessel', being physically weaker than men, but spiritually they are superior to them. Men are proud of their brute force, but women need not mind their inferiority in this real respect.—M. K. G.

I AM uncompromising in the matter of woman's rights. In my opinion she should labour under no legal disability not suffered by man. I should treat the daughters and sons on a footing of perfect equality. As women begin to realise their strength, as they must in proportion to the education they receive, they will naturally resent the glaring inequalities to which they are subjected. But to remove legal inequalities will be a mere palliative. The root of the evil lies much deeper than most people realise. It lies in man's greed of power and fame and deeper still in mutual lust. Man has always desired power. Ownership of property gives this power. Man hankers also after postumous fame based on power. This cannot be had, if property is progressively cut up in pieces, as it must be if all the posterity become equal co-sharers. Hence the descent of property for the most part on the eldest male issue. Most women are married. And they are co-sharers, inspite of the law being against them, in their husbands' power and privileges. They delight in being ladies this and what not simply for the

fact of being the wives of particular lords. Though, therefore, they may vote for radical reform in academic discussions over inequalities, when it comes to acting up to their vote, they will be found to be unwilling to part with the privileges.

Whilst, therefore, I would always advocate the repeal of all legal disqualifications, I should have the enlightened women of India to deal with the root cause. Woman is the embodiment of sacrifice and suffering, and her advent to public life should, therefore, result in purifying it, in restraining unbridled ambition and accumulation of property. Let them know that millions of men have no property to transmit to posterity. Let us learn from them that it is better for the few to have no ancestral property at all. The real property that a parent can transmit to all equally is his or her character and educational facilities. Parents should seek to make their sons and daughters self-reliant, well able to earn an honest livelihood by the sweat of the brow. The up-bringing of minor children will then naturally devolve upon the major descendants. Much of the present imbecility of the children of the wealthy will go, if the latter could but substitute the worthy ambition of educating their children to become independent for the unworthy ambition of making them slaves of ancestral property, which kills enterprise and feeds the passions which accompany idleness and luxury. The privilege of the awakened women should be to spot and eradicate age-long evils.

That mutual lust too has played an important part

in bringing about the disqualifications of the fair sex hardly needs any demonstration. Woman has circumvented man in a variety of ways in her unconsciously subtle ways, as man has vainly and equally unconsciously struggled to thwart woman in gaining ascendancy over him. The result is a stalemate. Thus viewed, it is a serious problem the enlightened daughters of *Bharat Mata* are called upon to solve. They may not ape the manner of the West which may be suited to its environment. They must apply methods suited to the Indian genius and Indian environment. Theirs must be the strong controlling, purifying, steadying hand, conserving what is best in our culture and unhesitatingly rejecting what is base and degrading. This is the work of Sitas, Draupadis, Savitris and Damayantis, not of amazons and prudes.—*Y.I.* 17-10-1929.

* * *

Queen of the Household

I do not envisage the wife, as a rule, following an avocation independently of her husband. The care of the children, and the upkeep of the household are quite enough to fully engage all her energy.

In a well-ordered family the additional burden of maintaining the family ought not to fall on her. The man should look to the maintenance of the family, the woman to household management ; the two thus supplementing and complementing each other's labours.

Nor do I see in this any invasion of woman's rights or suppression of her freedom. The saying attributed to Manu that "for woman there can be no freedom" is not

to me sacrosanct. It only shows that probably, at the time when it was promulgated, women were kept in a stage of subjection. The epithets used in our literature to describe a wife are *Ardhangana*, 'the better half,' and *Sahadharmini*, 'the helpmate.' The husband addressing the wife as *devi* or goddess does not show any disparagement. But, unfortunately, a time came when the woman was divested of many of her rights and privileges and was reduced to a status of inferiority. But there could be no depreciation of her *varna*. For, *varna* does not connote a set of rights or privileges ; it prescribes duties or obligations only. And no one can divest us of our duty, unless we ourselves choose to shirk it. The woman who knows and fulfils her duty realises her dignified status. She is the queen, not the slave, of the household over which she presides.—*H*. 12-10-1934.

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Economic Independence of Women

Q.—Some people oppose a modification of laws relating to the right of married women to own property on the ground that economic independence of woman would lead to the spread of immorality among women and disruption of domestic life. What is your attitude on the question ?

A.—I would answer the question by a counter question : Has not independence of man and his holding property led to the spread of immorality among men ? If you answer 'yes,' then let it be so also with women. And when women have rights of ownership and the rest like men, it would be found that the enjoyment of such rights is not responsible for their vices or their virtues.

Morality which depends upon the helplessness of a man or woman has not much to recommend it. Morality is rooted in the purity of our hearts.—*H*. 8-6-1940.

II. FOR WOMEN REFORMERS

It is a sin to bring forth unwanted children, but I think it is a greater sin to avoid the consequences of one's own action.—M. K. G.

From a serious discussion I had with a sister I fear that my position on the use of contraceptives has not yet been sufficiently understood. My opposition is not due to their having come to us from the West. I thankfully use some Western things when I know that they benefit us as they benefit those in the West. My opposition to contraceptives is based on merits.

I take it that the wisest among the protagonists of contraceptives restrict their use to married women who desire to satisfy their and their husband's sexual appetite without wanting children. I hold this desire as unnatural in the human species and its satisfaction detrimental to the spiritual progress of the human family. As against this is often cited the following testimony among others of Lord Dawson of Penn :

> "Sex love is one of the clamant, dominating forces of the world. Here we have an instinct, so fundamental, so imperious that its influence is a fact which has to be accepted : suppress it you cannot. You may guide it into healthy channels, but an outlet it will have, and if that outlet is inadequate or unduly obstructed, irregular channels will be forced. Self-control has a breaking point, and if in any community marriage is difficult or late of attainment, an increase of irregular unions will

inevitably result. All are agreed that union of body should be in association with union of mind and soul ; all are agreed that the rearing of children is a pre-eminent purpose. Has not sexual union over and over again been the physical expression of our love without thought or intention of procreation ? Have we all been wrong ? Or is it that the Church lacks that vital contact with the realities of life which accounts for the gulf between her and the people ? Authority, and I include under authority the churches, will never gain the allegiance of the young unless their attitude is more frank, more courageous, and more in accordance with realities.

Sex love has, apart from parenthood, a purport of its own. It is an essential part of health and happiness in marriage. If sexual union is a gift from God, it is worth learning how to use it. Within its own sphere it should be cultivated so as to bring physical satisfaction to both, not merely to one. The attainment of mutual and reciprocal joy in their relations constitutes a firm bond between two people and makes for durability of their marriage tie. More marriages fail from inadequate and clumsy sex love than from too much sex love. Passion is a worthy possession ; most men who are any good are capable of passion. Sex love without passion is a poor lifeless thing. Sensuality on the other hand is on a level with gluttony, a physical excess. Now that the revision of the Prayer Book is receiving consideration, I should like to suggest, with great respect, that an addition be made to the objects of marriage in the Marriage Service in these terms : 'The complete realisation of the love of this man and this woman, the one for the other.'

I will pass on to consider the all-important question of birth control. Birth control is here to

stay. It is an established fact, and for good or evil has to be accepted. No denunciations will abolish it. The reasons which lead parents to limit their offspring are sometimes selfish, but more often honourable and cogent. The desire to marry and to rear children well equipped for life's struggle, limited incomes, the cost of living, burdensome taxation, are forcible motives; and, further, amongst the educated classes there is the desire of women to take part in life and their husband's careers, which is incompatible with oft-recurring pregnancies. Absence of birth control means late marriages, and these carry with them irregular unions and all the baneful consequences. It is idle to decry illicit intercourse and interpose obstacles to marriage at one and the same time. But say many, 'Birth control may be necessary, but the only birth control which is justifiable is voluntary abstention.' Such abstention would be either ineffective or, if effective, impracticable and harmful to health and happiness. To limit the size of a family to, say, four children, would be to impose on a married couple an amount of abstention which for long periods would almost be equivalent to celibacy, and when one remembers that owing to economic reasons the abstention would have to be most strict during the earlier years of marriage life when desires are strongest, I maintain a demand is being made which, for the mass of people, it is impossible to meet; that the endeavours to meet it would impose a strain hostile to health and happiness and carry with them grave dangers to morals. The thing is preposterous. You might as well put water by the side of a man suffering from thirst and tell him not to drink it. No, birth control by abstention is either ineffective, or, if effective, is pernicious.

It is said to be unnatural and intrinsically

immoral. Civilisation involves the chaining of natural forces and their conversion to man's will and uses. When anaesthetics were first used at child birth there was an outcry that their use was unnatural and wicked, because God meant woman to suffer. It is no more unnatural to control child-birth by artificial means. The use of birth control is good, its abuse bad. May I end by an appeal that the Church approach this question, in common with certain others, in the light of modern knowledge and the needs of a new world, and unhampered by traditions which have outworn their usefulness ?"

Lord Dawson's eminence is not to be denied. But with all due respect to his greatness as a physician, I am tempted to question the value of his evidence, specially when it is pitted against the experience of men and women who have lived a life of continence without suffering any moral or physical harm. Physicians generally come across those who have so defied laws of health that they have contracted some illness. They, therefore, often successfully prescribe what sufferers should do to become well, but they cannot always know what healthy men and women can do in any particular direction. Lord Dawson's evidence, therefore, about the effect of continence on married people has to be taken with the greatest caution. No doubt the tendency among married people is to regard sexual satisfaction for itself as legitimate. But in the modern age in which nothing is taken for granted and everything is rightly scrutinized, it is surely wrong to take it for granted that, because we have hitherto indulged in the sexual appetite in married life, the practice is either legitimate or healthy.

Many old practices have been discontinued with good results. Why should this particular practice be exempt from examination, especially in the light of the experience of those who even as married men and women are living a life of restraint with mutual benefit both physical and moral ?

But I object to contraceptives also on special grounds in India. Young men in India do not know what sexual restraint is. It is not their fault. They are married early. It is the custom. Nobody tells them to exercise restraint in married life. Parents are impatient to see grandchildren. The poor girl wives are expected by their surroundings to bear children as fast as they can. In such surroundings, the use of contraceptives can only further aggravate the mischief. The poor girls who are expected to submit to their husbands' desires are now to be taught that it is a good thing to desire sexual satisfaction without the desire to have children. And in order to fulfil the double purpose they are to have recourse to contraceptives ! ! !

I regard this to be the most pernicious education for married women. I do not believe that woman is prey to sexual desire to the same extent as man. It is easier for her than for man to exercise self-restraint. I hold that the right education in this country is to teach woman the art of saying no even to her husband, to teach her that it is no part of her duty to become a mere tool or a doll in her husband's hands. She has rights as well as duties. Those who see in Sita a willing slave under Rama do not realise the loftiness of either

her independence or Rama's consideration for her in everything. Sita was no helpless weak woman incapable of protecting herself or her honour. To ask India's women to take to contraceptives is, to say the least, putting the cart before the horse. The first thing is to free her from mental slavery, to teach her the sacredness of her body, and to teach her the dignity of national service and the service of humanity. It is not fair to assume that India's women are beyond redemption, and that they have therefore to be simply taught the use of contraceptives for the sake of preventing births and preserving such health as they may be in possession of.

Let not the sisters who are rightly indignant over the miseries of women who are called upon to bear children whether they will or no, be impatient. Not even the propaganda in favour of contraceptives is going to promote the desired end overnight. Every method is a matter of education. My plea is for the right type.—*H*. 2-5-1936.

III. WOMAN'S MISSION

If I was born a woman, I would rise in rebellion against any pretention on the part of man that woman is born to be his plaything.—M. K. G.

Women have got to come up to the level of man. They may not copy man in all the wildness of his nature ; but they must come to the level of man in all that is best in him.—*Y.I.* 1-12-1927.

* * *

Hindu culture has erred on the side of excessive subordination of the wife to the husband, and has insisted on the complete merging of the wife in the husband. This has resulted in the husband sometimes usurping and exercising authority that reduces him to the level of the brute. The remedy for such excesses, therefore, lies not through the law but through the true education of women as distinguished from unmarried girls, and through cultivating public opinion against unmanly conduct on the part of husbands.—*Y.I.* 3-10-1929.

* * *

To call woman the weaker sex is a libel ; it is man's injustice to woman. If by strength is meant brute strength, then indeed is woman less brute than man. If by strength is meant moral power, then woman is immeasurably man's superior. Has she not greater intuition, is she not more self-sacrificing, has she not greater powers of endurance, has she not greater courage ?

Without her man could not be. If non-violence is the law of our being, the future is with woman... Who can make a more effective appeal to the heart than woman ?

—*Y.I.* 10-4-1930

* * *

Had not man in his blind selfishness crushed woman's soul as he has done or had she not succumbed to 'the enjoyments' she would have given the world an exhibition of the infinite strength that is latent in her. The world shall see it in all its wonder and glory when woman has secured an equal opportunity for herself with man and fully developed her powers of mutual aid and combination.—*Y.I.* 7-5-1931.

* * *

Women are special custodians of all that is pure and religious in life. Conservative by nature, if they are slow to shed superstitious habits, they are also slow to give up all that is pure and noble in life.—*H.* 25-3-1933.

* * *

I do believe that it is woman's mission to exhibit *Ahimsa* at its highest and best...For woman is more fitted than man to make explorations and take bolder action in *Ahimsa*...For the courage of self-sacrifice woman is anyday superior to man, as I believe man is to woman for the courage of the brute.—*H.* 5-11-1938.

* * *

Woman is the embodiment of sacrifice and therefore non-violence. Her occupations must therefore be, as they are, more conducive to peace than war. That she is now being dragged down for purposes of violent war

is no credit to modern civilisation. I have no doubt that violence so ill becomes woman that presently she will rebel against the violation of her fundamental nature. I feel that man too will repent of his folly. Equality of the sexes does not mean equality of occupations. There may be no legal bar against a woman hunting or wielding a lance. But she instinctively recoils from a function that belongs to man. Nature has created sexes as complements of each other. Their functions are defined as are their forms.—*H*. 2-12-1939.

IV. REGENERATION OF WOMEN

I believe in the proper education of women. But I do believe that woman will not make her contribution to the world by mimicing or running a race with men. She can run the race, but she will not rise to the great heights she is capable of by mimicing man. She has to be the complement of man.—M. K. G.

It is necessary to understand what we mean when we talk of the regeneration of women. It presupposes degeneration, and if that is so, we should further consider what led to it and how. It is our primary duty to have some very hard thinking on these points. In travelling all over India, I have come to realise that all the existing agitation is confined to an infinitesimal section of our people, who are really a mere speck in the vast firmament. Crores of people of both sexes live in absolute ignorance of this agitation. Full eight-five per cent of the people of this country pass their innocent days in a state of total detachment from what is going on around them. These men and women, ignorant as they are, do their bit in life well and properly. Both have the same education or rather the absence of education. Both are helping each other, as they ought to do. If their lives are in any sense incomplete, the cause can be traced to the incompleteness of the lives of the remaining fifteen per cent.

In the observations that I am going to make, I will

confine myself to the fifteen per cent above mentioned, and even then it would be out of place to discuss the disabilities that are common to both men and women. The point for us to consider is the regeneration of our women relatively to our men. Legislation has been mostly the handiwork of men ; and man has not always been fair and discriminate in performing that self-appointed task. The largest part of our effort, in promoting the regeneration of women, should be directed towards removing those blemishes which are represented in our *Shastras* as the necessary and ingrained characteristics of women. Who will attempt this and how ? In my humble opinion, in order to make the attempt, we will have to produce women pure, firm and self-controlled as Sita, Damayanti and Draupadi. If we do produce them, such modern sisters will receive the same homage from Hindu society as is being paid to their prototypes of yore. Their words will have the same authority as the *Shastras*. We will feel ashamed of the stray reflections on them in our *Smritis*, and will soon forget them. Such revolutions have occured in Hinduism in the past, and will still take place in the future, leading to the stability of our faith.

We have now discussed the root-cause of degeneration of our women, and have considered the ideals by the realisation of which the present conditions of our women can be improved. The number of women who can realise those ideals will be necessarily very few, and, therefore, we will now consider what ordinary women can accomplish if they would try. Their first attempt

should be directed towards awakening in the minds of as many women as possible a proper sense of their present condition. I am not among those who believe that such an effort can be made through literary education only. To work on that basis would be to postpone indefinitely the accomplishment of our aims ; I have experienced at every step that it is not at all necessary to wait so long. We can bring home to our women the sad realities of their present condition without, in the first instance, giving them any literary education.

Woman is the companion of man, gifted with equal mental capacities. She has the right to participate in every minutest detail in the activities of man and she has an equal right of freedom and liberty with him. She is entitled to a supreme place in her own sphere of activity as man is in his. This ought to be the natural condition of things and not as a result only of learning to read and write. By sheer force of a vicious custom, even the most ignorant and worthless men have been enjoying a superiority over women which they do not deserve and ought not to have. Many of our movements stop half way because of the condition of our women. Much of our work done does not yield appropriate results ; our lot is like that of the penny-wise and pound foolish trader who does not employ enough capital in his business.

But, although much good and useful work can be done without a knowledge of reading and writing, yet it is my firm belief that you cannot always do without a knowledge thereof. It develops and sharpens one's intellect and it stimulates our power of doing good. I

have never placed an unnecessarily high value on the knowledge of reading and writing. I am only attempting to assign its proper place to it. I have pointed out from time to time that there is no justification for men to deprive women or to deny them equal rights on the grounds of their illiteracy ; but education is essential for enabling women to uphold these natural rights, to improve them and to spread them ; again, the true knowledge of self is unattainable by the millions who are without such education. Many a book is full of innocent pleasure and this will be denied to us without education. It is no exaggeration to say that a human being without education is not far removed from an animal. Education, therefore, is necessary for women as it is for men. Not that the methods of education should be identical in both cases. In the first place, our State system of education is full of error and productive of harm in many respects. It should be eschewed by men and women alike. Even if it were free from its present blemishes, I would not regard it as proper for women from all points of view. Man and woman are of equal rank but they are not identical. They are a peerless pair being supplementary to one another ; each helps the other, so that without the one the existence of the other cannot be conceived, and, therefore, it follows as a necessary corollary from these facts that anything that will impair the status of either of them will involve the equal ruin of them both. In framing any scheme of women's education this cardinal truth must be constantly kept in mind. Man is supreme in the outward

activities of a married pair and, therefore, it is in the fitness of things that he should have a greater knowledge thereof. On the other hand, home life is entirely the sphere of woman and, therefore, in domestic affairs, in the upbringing and education of children, women ought to have more knowledge. Not that knowledge should be divided into watertight compartments, or that some branches of knowledge should be closed to any one ; but unless courses of instruction are based on a discriminating appreciation of these basic principles, the fullest life of man and woman cannot be developed.

I have come to the conclusion that in the ordinary course of our lives neither our men nor our women need necessarily have any knowledge of English. True, English is necessary for making a living and for active association in our political movements. I do not believe in women working for a living or undertaking commercial enterprizes. The few women who may require or desire to have English education, can very easily have their way by joining the schools for men. To introduce English education in schools meant for women could only lead to prolong our helplessness. I have often read and heard people saying that the rich treasures of English literature should be opened alike to men and women. I submit in all humility that there is some misapprehension in assuming such an attitude. No one intends to close these treasures against women while keeping them open for men.

There is none on earth able to prevent you from studying the literature of the whole world if you are

fond of literary tastes. But when courses of education have been framed with the needs of a particular society in view, you cannot supply the requirements of the few who have cultivated a literary taste. In asking our men and women to spend less time in the study of English than they are doing now, my object is not to deprive them of the pleasure which they are likely to derive from it, but I hold that the same pleasure can be obtained at less cost and trouble if we follow a more natural method. The world is full of many a gem of priceless beauty, but then these gems are not all of English setting. Other languages can well boast of productions of similar excellence ; all these should be made available for our common people and that can only be done if our own learned men will undertake to translate them for us in our own languages.

Merely to have outlined a scheme of education as above is not to have removed the bane of child marriage from our society or to have conferred on our women an equality of rights. Let us now consider the case of our girls who disappear, so to say, from view after marriage. They are not likely to return to our schools. Conscious of the unspeakable and unthinkable sin of the child marriage of their daughters, their mothers cannot think of educating them or of otherwise making their dry life a cheerful one. The man who marries a young girl, does not do so out of any altruistic motives but through sheer lust. Who is to rescue these girls ? A proper answer to this question will also be a solution of the woman's problem. The answer is albeit difficult, but it is only

one. There is, of course, none to champion her cause but her husband. It is useless to expect a child wife to be able to bring round the man who has married her. The difficult work must, therefore, for the present at least be left to man. If I could, I would take a census of child-wives and will find the friends, as well as through moral and polite exhortations I will attempt, to bring home to them the enormity of their crime, in linking their fortunes with child-wives and will warn them that there is no expiation for that sin unless and until they have by education made their wives fit, not only to bear children but also to bring them up properly and unless in the meantime they live a life of absolute celibacy.

— *S. & W.*, p. 424.

V. WHAT IS WOMAN'S ROLE?

Woman is the embodiment of sacrifice and suffering, and her advent to public life should therefore result in purifying it, in restraining unbridled ambition and accumulation of property.—M. G. K.

(Commenting on a lengthy communication from 'a highly educated sister,' who opined that the fair sex required treatment different from men, Gandhiji wrote as follows) :

The writer of the letter is of opinion that the fair sex requires treatment different from men. If it is so, I do not think any man will find the correct solution. No matter how much he tries, he must fail because nature has made him different from woman. Only the toad under the harrow knows where it pinches him. Therefore ultimately woman will have to determine with authority what she needs. My own opinon is that, just as fundamentally man and woman are one, their problem must be one in essence. The soul in both is the same. The two live the same life, have the same feelings. Each is a complement of the other. The one cannot live without the other's active help.

But somehow or other man has dominated woman from ages past, and so woman has developed an inferiority complex. She has believed in the truth of man's interested teaching that she is inferior to him. But the seers among men have recognised her equal status.

Nevertheless there is no doubt that at some point there is bifurcation. Whilst both are fundamentally one, it is also equally true that in the form there is a vital difference between the two. Hence the vocations of the two must also be different. The duty of motherhood, which the vast majority of women will always undertake, requires qualities which man need not possess. She is passive, he is active. She is essentially mistress of the house. He is the bread-winner, she is the keeper and distributor of the bread. She is the care-taker in every sense of the term. The art of bringing up the infants of the race is her special and sole prerogative. Without her care the race must become extinct.

In my opinion it is degrading both for man and woman that woman should be called upon or induced to forsake the hearth and shoulder the rifle for the protection of that hearth. It is a reversion to barbarity and the beginning of the end. In trying to ride the horse that man rides, she brings herself and him down. The sin will be on man's head for tempting or compelling his companion to desert her special calling. There is as much bravery in keeping one's home in good order and condition as there is in defending it against attack from without.

As I have watched millions of peasants in their natural surroundings and as I watch them daily in little Segaon, the natural division of spheres of work has forced itself on my attention. There are no women blacksmiths and carpenters. But men and women work on the fields, the heaviest work being done by the males. The women keep and manage the homes. They

supplement the meagre resources of the family, but man remains the main bread-winner.

The division of the spheres of work being recognised, the general qualities and culture required are practically the same for both the sexes.

My contribution to the great problem lies in my presenting for acceptance truth and ahimsa in every walk of life, whether for individuals or nations. I have hugged the hope that in this woman will be the unquestioned leader and, having thus found her place in human evolution, will shed her inferiority complex. If she is able to do this successfully, she must resolutely refuse to believe in the modern teaching that everything is determined and regulated by the sex impulse. I fear I have put the proposition rather clumsily. But I hope my meaning is clear. I do not know that the millions of men who are taking an active part in the war are obsessed by the sex spectre. Nor are the peasants working together in their fields worried or dominated by it. This is not to say or suggest that they are free from the instinct implanted in man and woman. But it most certainly does not dominate their lives as it seems to dominate the lives of those who are saturated with the modern sex literature. Neither man nor woman has time for such things when he or she is faced with the hard fact of living life in its grim reality.

I have suggested in these columns that woman is the incarnation of ahimsa. Ahimsa means infinite love, which again means infinite capacity for suffering. Who but woman, the mother of man, shows this capacity in

the largest measure ? She shows it as she carries the infant and feeds it during nine months and derives joy in the suffering involved. What can beat the suffering caused by the pangs of labour ? But she forgets them in the joy of creation. Who again suffers daily so that her babe may wax from day to day ? Let her transfer that love to the whole of humanity, let her forget she ever was or can be the object of man's lust. And she will occupy her proud position by the side of man as his mother, maker and silent leader. It is given to her to teach the art of peace to the warring world thirsting for that nectar. She can become the leader in Satyagraha which does not require the learning that books give but does require the stout heart that comes from suffering and faith.

My good nurse in the Sassoon Hospital, Poona, as I was lying on a sick bed years ago, told me the story of a woman who refused to take chloroform because she would not risk the life of the babe she was carrying. She had to undergo a painful operation. The only anæsthetic she had was her love for the babe, to save whom no suffering was too great. Let not women, who can count many such heroines among them, ever despise their fair sex or deplore that they were not born men. The contemplation of that heroine often makes me envy woman the status that is hers, if she only knew. There is as much reason for man to wish that he was born a woman as for woman to do otherwise. But the wish is fruitless. Let us be happy in the state to which we are born and do the duty for which nature has destined us.—*H*, 24-2-1940.

VI. WRONG APOTHEOSIS OF WOMEN

Before you put your pens to paper, think of woman as your own mother, and I assure you the chastest literature will flow from your pens, even like the beautiful rain from heaven which waters the thirsty earth below.—M. K. G.

(The occasion was a letter addressed to him by the ladies in charge of a women's movement called *Jyoti Sangh*. The letter enclosed copy of a resolution they had passed condemning the present-day tendencies in literature regarding the presentation of women. There was, Gandhiji felt, considerable force in the complaint, and he said) :

The gravamen of their charge is that the present-day writers give an entirely false picture of women. They are exasperated at the sickly sentimentality with which you delineate them, at the vulgar way in which you dwell on their physical form. Does all their beauty and their strength lie in their physical form, in their capacity to please the lustful eye of men ? Why, the writers of the letter justly ask, should we be eternally represented as meek submissive women for whom all the menial jobs of the household are reserved, and whose only deities are their husbands ? Why are they not delineated as they really are ? We are, they say, neither aetherial damsels, nor dolls, nor bundles of passions and nerves. We are as much human beings as men are, and we are filled with the same urge for freedom. I claim to know them and their minds sufficiently well. There

was a time in South Africa when I was surrounded by numerous women, all their men-folk having gone to jails. There were some sixty inmates and I had become the brother and father of all the girls and women. Let me tell you that they grew in strength and spirit under me, so much so that they ultimately marched to jails themselves.

I am told that our literature is full of even an exaggerated apotheosis of women. Let me say that it is an altogether wrong apotheosis. Let me place one simple test before you. In what light do you think of them when you proceed to write about them ? I suggest that before you put your pens to paper, think of woman as your own mother, and I assure you the chastest literature will flow from your pens even like the beautiful rain from heaven which waters the thirsty earth below. Remember that a woman was your mother before a woman became your wife. Far from quenching their spiritual thirst some writers stimulate their passions, so much so that poor ignorant women waste their time wondering how they might answer to the description our fiction gives of them. Are detailed descriptions of their physical form an essential part of literature, I wonder ? Do you find anything of the kind in the Upanishads, the Quran or the Bible ? And yet do you know that the English language would be empty without the Bible ? Three parts Bible and one part Shakespeare is the description of it. Arabic would be forgotten without the Quran. And think of Hindi without Tulsidas ! Do you find in it anything like what you find in present-day literature about women ?—*H*. 21-11-1936.

VII. CHILD-WIVES AND CHILD-WIDOWS

If marriage is, as it ought to be, a sacrament, an entrance into a new life, the girls to be married should be fully developed, should have some hand in the choice of companions for life, and should know the consequences of their acts. It is a crime against God and man to call the union of children a married state and then to decree widowhood for a girl whose so-called husband is dead.—M. K. G.

I am strongly in favour of raising the age of consent not merely to 14, but even to 16... I heartily endorse any movement whose object is to save innocent girls of tender age from man's lust. A so-called marriage rite ought no longer to confer legality upon an immoral and inhuman act, which consummation even at the age of 14, in my humble opinion, undoubtedly is. Sanskrit texts of doubtful authority cannot be invoked to sanctity a practice which is in itself immoral. I have witnessed the ruin of the health of many a child mother, and when to the horrors of an early marriage is added enforced early widowhood, human tragedy becomes complete. Any sensible legislation in the direction of raising the age of consent will certainly have my approval. But I am painfully conscious of the fact that even the existing legislation has proved abortive for want of public opinion to support it. The task of the reformer in this as in many other directions is most difficult. Constant and continuous agitation is necessary, if any real impression

is to be made on the Hindu public. I wish every success to those who are engaged in the noble task of rescuing Indian girls from premature old age and early death, and Hinduism from being responsible for bringing into being ricketty weaklings.—*Y.I.* 27-8-1925.

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It is irreligion, not religion, to give religious sanction to a brutal custom. The *Smritis* bristle with contradictions. The only reasonable deduction to be drawn from the contradictions is that the texts that may be contrary to known and accepted morality, more especially to the moral precepts enjoined in the *Smritis* themselves, must be rejected as interpolations. Inspiring verses on self-restraint could not be written at the same time and by the same pen that wrote the verses encouraging the brute in man. Only a man innocent of self-restraint and steeped in vice could call it a sin not to marry a girl before she reached the age of monthly periods. It should be held sinful to marry a girl for several years after the periods begin. There cannot be even the thought of marriage before the periods begin. A girl is no more fit to bear children on beginning the periods than a lad is to procreate as soon as he grows the first hair on his upper lip.

This custom of child marriage is both a moral as well as a physical evil. For it undermines our morals and induces physical degeneration. By countenancing such customs we recede from God as well as Swaraj. A man who has no thought of the tender age of a girl has none of God. And undergrown men have no capacity

for fighting battles of freedom or, having gained it, of retaining it. Fight for Swaraj means not mere political awakening but an all-round awakening—social, educational, economic and political.

Legislation is being promoted to raise the age of consent. It may be good for bringing a minority to book. But it is not legislation that will cure a popular evil; it is enlightened public opinion that can do it. I am not opposed to legislation in such matters, but I do lay greater stress on the cultivation of public opinion... Ordinarily a girl under 18 years should never be given in marriage.—*Y.I.* 26-8-1926.

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No doubt man is primarily responsible for this state of things. But may women always throw the blame on men and salve their consciences? Do the enlightened among them not owe to their sex, as also to men whose mothers they are, to take up the burden of reform? What is all the education worth that they are receiving, if on marriage they are to become mere dolls for their husbands and prematurely engaged in the task of rearing would-be manikins? They may fight, if they like, for votes for women. It costs neither time nor trouble. But where are the brave women who would work among the girl wives and girl widows, and who would take no rest and leave none for men, till girl marriages become an impossibility, and till every girl feels in herself strength enough to refuse to be married except when she is of full age and to the person about whom she is given the final choice?—*Y.I.* 7-10-1926.

Voluntary Widowhood

Voluntary widowhood is a priceless boon in Hinduism ; enforced widowhood is a curse. And I very much feel that many young widows, if they were absolutely free, not so much from the fear of physical restraint as from the opprobrium of Hindu public opinion, would remarry without the slightest hesitation.

All the young widows, therefore, should have every inducement given to them to remarry and should be sure that no blame would be attached to them if they chose to remarry. This is not work that can be done by any institution. This work has got to be done by individual reformers.—*H*. 22-6-1935.

VIII. WIDOW-REMARRIAGE

Widow-remarriage is no sin—if it be, it is as much a sin as the marriage of a widower is. All widowhood is not holy. It is an adornment to her who can observe it.

—M. K. G.

Remarriage of widows is necessary to a certain extent. The reform can be brought about only when our youths have purified themselves. Are they pure? Do they profit by their education? Or why blame their education? From childhood up a slave-mentality is sedulously cultivated in us. And if we cannot think freely how can we act freely? We are alike slaves of the caste, of a foreign education, and of an alien Government. Every one of the facilities provided us have become our fetters. There are so many educated youths amongst us. How few of them have thought of the lot of the widows in their own homes? How few have resisted the temptation of lucre? How few regard them as their own sisters and mothers and protect their honour? How few have had the courage of their convictions and defied their castes to do their worst? Whom is the poor widow to approach?...I would appeal to everyone who has a child widow under his care to consider it his duty to marry her.—*Y.I.* 4-2-1926.

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Enforced Widowhood

To force widowhood upon little girls is a brutal

crime for which we Hindus are daily paying dearly... Voluntary widowhood consciously adopted by a woman who has felt the affection of a partner adds grace and dignity to life, sanctifies the home and uplifts religion itself. Widowhood imposed by religion or custom is an unbearable yoke and defiles the home by secret vice and degrades religion...If we would be pure, if we would save Hinduism, we must rid ourselves of this poison of enforced widowhood. The reform must begin by those who have girl widows taking courage in both their hands and seeing that the child widows in their charge are duly and well married—not remarried. They were never really married.—*Y.I.* 5-8-1926.

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The suggestion that young widows will take up all young men and leave none for unmarried girls betrays a woeful want of sense of proportion. The excessive anxiety for the chastity of young girls betrays an unhealthy mind. The limited number of widows remarrying can never leave a large number of young girls unmarried. And in any event, if ever such a problem arose it would be found to be due to the early marriages that take place today. The remedy in anticipation is to prevent early marriages.

Of the love, the sanctity of *grahastha* life, etc., where there is widow of tender age, the less said the better...I have never advocated widow remarriage on a wholesale scale...

These poor, wretched beings ('widows upto 15 years only') know nothing of *Pativrata* dharma. They are

strangers to love. The truer statement would be to say that these girls were never married at all.

If marriage is, as it ought to be, a sacrament, an entrance into a new life, the girls to be married should be fully developed, should have some hand in the choice of companions for life, and should know the consequences of their acts.

It is a crime against God and man to call the union of the children a married state and then to decree widowhood for a girl whose so-called husband is dead.

I do believe that a real Hindu widow is a treasure. She is one of the gifts of Hinduism to humanity...But the existence of girl widows is a blot upon Hinduism.

—*Y.I.* 19-8-1926

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The sacredness of the institution can be preserved only when it is purged of the curse of child widowhood. The statement that the widows attain *Moksha* if they observe *Brahmacharya* has no foundation whatsoever in experience. More things are necessary than mere *Brahmacharya* for the attainment of the final bliss. And *Brahmacharya* that is superimposed carries no merit with it, and often gives rise to secret vice that saps the morals of the society in which that vice exists.

There is and very properly, glorification of real widowhood in Hinduism, there is, so far as I am aware, no warrant for the belief that in the Vedic times there was any absolute ban upon remarriage of widows. But my crusade is not against real widowhood. It is against its atrocious caricature.

The better way is not to regard as widows at all the girls I have in view and whom every Hindu who has a spark of chivalry in him is bound to relieve from their intolerable yoke. I therefore humbly but emphatically repeat the advice to every young Hindu to refuse to marry any but these maidens miscalled widows

Y.I. 6-10-1927

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If a young man of 18 being widowed could remarry, why should not a widow of that age have the same right ? Voluntary enlightened widowhood is a great asset for any nation, as enforced ignorant widowhood is a disgrace.

Hindu society must make the way absolutely open for such widows to remarry whenever they like. The curse of every widow who is burning within to remarry but dare not for fear of a cruel custom descends upon Hindu society so long as it keeps the widow under an unforgivable bondage.—*Y.I.* 2-5-1929.

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Duty of Parents

No outside imposition can cure Hindu society of the enforced widowhood of girls who don't even know what marriage is. The reform can come first by the force of enlightened public opinion among Hindus, secondly by parents recognizing the duty of marrying their girl widows. This they can do, where the girls' consent is lacking, by educating their minds to the correctness of their marrying. Naturally this refers to girls under age. Where the so-called widows have grown to maturity and they do not desire to marry, nothing is necessary save to tell them that they are free to marry precisely as

if they were maidens unmarried. It is difficult to break the chains of prisoners who hug them, mistaking them as ornaments, as girls and even grown up women do regard their silver or golden chains and rings as ornaments.

H. 20-3-1937.

IX. SATI

Satihood is the acme of purity. This purity cannot be attained or realised by dying. It can be attained only through constant striving, constant immolation of the spirit from day to day.—M. K. G.

Self-immolation at the death of the husband is not a sign of enlightenment but of gross ignorance as to the nature of the soul. The soul is immortal, unchangeable and immanent.

It does not perish with the physical body but journeys on from one mortal frame to another till it completely emancipates itself from earthly bondage. The truth of it has been attested to by the experience of countless sages and seers and can be realised by any one who may wish to even today. How can suicide be then justified in the light or these facts ?

Again, true marriage means not merely union of bodies. If connotes the union of the souls too. If marriage meant no more than a physical relationship the bereaved wife should be satisfied with a portrait or a waxen image of her husband. But self-destruction is worse. It cannot help to restore the dead to life, on the contrary it only takes away one more from the world of the living.

The ideal that marriage aims at is that of spiritual union through the physical. The human love that it incarnates is intended to serve as a stepping stone to the

divine or universal love. That is why immortal Mira sang:

"God alone is my husband—none else."

It follows from this that a Sati would regard marriage not as a means of satisfying the animal appetite but as a means of realising the ideal of selfless and self-effacing service by completely merging her individuality in the husband's.

She would protect her Satihood not by mounting the funeral pyre at her husband's death but she would prove it with every breath that she breathes from the moment that she plighted her troth to him at the *Saptapadi* ceremony, by her renunciation, sacrifice, self-abnegation and dedication to the service of her husband, his family and the country.

She would shun creature comforts and delights of the senses. She would refuse to be enslaved by the narrow domestic cares and interests of the family, but would utilise every opportunity to add to her stock of knowledge and increase her capacity for service by more and more cultivating renunciation and self-discipline and by completely identifying herself with her husband, learn to identify herself with the whole world.

Such a Sati would refuse to give way to wild grief at the death of her husband but would ever strive to make her late husband's ideals and virtues live again in her actions and thereby win for him the crown of immortality. Knowing that the soul of him whom she married is not dead but still lives she will never think of remarrying.

In our present day Hindu society, marriage in a vast majority of cases, is not a matter of choice. Again, there are some who believe that in our ramshackle age marriage is necessary as a shield to virtue and as an aid to self-restraint.

And as a matter of fact, I personally know several instances of persons who, though at the time of the marriage were not free from animal passion, later on became imbued with the ideal of absolute chastity and found in their married life a powerful means for realising their ideal.

I have cited these instances to show that the ideal of Sati that I have depicted is not merely a counsel of perfection that has no place outside the world of theory, but something that has to be lived up to and realised in this very matter of fact world of ours.

But I readily concede that the average wife who strives to attain the ideal of Sati will be a mother too. She must therefore add to her various other qualities mentioned above a knowledge of rearing and bringing up children so that they might live to be true servants of their country.

All that I have said about the wife applies equally to the husband. If the wife has to prove her loyalty and undivided devotion to her husband, so has the husband to prove his allegiance and devotion to his wife. You cannot have one set of weights and measures for the one and a different one for the other.

Yet we have never heard of a husband mounting the funeral pyre of his deceased wife. It may therefore

be taken for granted that the practice of the widow immolating herself at the death of her husband had its origin in superstitious ignorance and the blind egotism of man.

Even if it could be proved that at one time the practice had a meaning, it can only be regarded as barbarous in the present age. The wife is not the slave of the husband but his comrade, otherwise known as his better-half, his colleague and friend. She is a co-sharer with him of equal rights and of equal duties. Their obligations towards each other and towards the world must, therefore, be the same and reciprocal.

Satihood is the acme of purity. This purity cannot be attained or realised by dying. It can be attained only through constant striving, constant immolation of the spirit from day to day.—*Y.I.* 21-5-1931.

X. OUR FALLEN SISTERS

My heart goes out to the fallen sisters. They are driven to a life of shame. I am satisfied that they do not go to it from choice. And the beast in man has made the detestable crime a lucrative profession. I urge all to deal with this moral plague.—M. K. G.

All of us men must hang our heads in shame, so long as there is a single woman whom we dedicate to our lust. I will far rather see the race of man extinct than that we should become less than beasts by making the noblest of God's creation the object of our lust. But this is not a problem merely for India. It is a world problem.

And if I preach against the modern artificial life of sensual enjoyment, and ask men and women to go back to the simple life epitomised in the charkha, I do so because I know, that without an intelligent return to simplicity, there is no escape from our descent to a state lower than brutality. I passionately desire the utmost freedom for our women. I detest child-marriages. I shudder to see a child widow, and shiver with rage when a husband, just widowed, with brutal indifference contracts another marriage. I deplore the criminal indifference of parents who keep their daughters utterly ignorant and illiterate and bring them up only for the purpose of marrying them off to some young man of means. Notwithstanding all this grief and rage, I realise the difficulty of the problem. Women must have votes

and an equal legal status. But the problem does not end there. It only commences at the point where women begin to affect the political deliberations of the nation ...Woman must cease to consider herself the object of man's lust. The remedy is more in her hands than man's. She must refuse to adorn herself for men including her husband, if she will be an equal partner with man. I cannot imagine Sita ever wasting a single moment on pleasing Rama by physical charms.

Y.I. 21-7-1921.

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Of all the evils for which man has made himself responsible, none is so degrading, so shocking or so brutal as his abuse of the better half of humanity to me, the female sex, not the weaker sex. It is the nobler of the two, for it is even today the embodiment of sacrifice, silent suffering, humility, faith and knowledge. A woman's intuition has often proved truer than man's arrogant assumption of superior knowledge.

Let us not delude ourselves into the belief, that this gambling in vice has a place in our evolution because it is rampant and in some cases even state-regulated in civilized Europe. Let us not also perpetuate the vice on the strength of Indian precedents.

We should cease to grow the moment we cease to discriminate between virtue and vice and slavishly copy the past which we do not fully know. We are proud heirs to all that was noblest and best in the by-gone age. We must not dishonour our heritage by multiplying past errors.

In a self-respecting India, is not every woman's virtue as much every man's concern or his sister's ? Swaraj means ability to regard every inhabitant of India as our own brother or sister.

Before these unfortunate sisters could be weaned from their degradation, two conditions have to be fulfilled. We men must learn to control our passions and these women should be found a calling that would enable them to earn an honourable living.

Y.I. 15-9-1921.

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Man to Blame

It is a matter of bitter shame and sorrow, of deep humiliation, that a number of women have to sell their chastity for man's lust. Man the lawgiver will have to pay a dreadful penalty for the degradation he has imposed upon the so-called weaker sex.

When woman, freed from man's snares, rises to the full height and rebels against man's legislation and institutions designed by him, her rebellion, no doubt non-violent, will be none the less effective.

Let man ponder over the fate of the thousands of sisters who are destined to a life of shame for his unlawful and immoral indulgence. The pity of it is that the vast majority of the men who visit these pestilential haunts are married men and therefore commit a double sin. They sin against their wives to whom they have sworn allegiance and they sin against the sisters whose purity they are bound to guard with as much jealousy as that of their own blood sisters. It is an evil which cannot

last for a single day, if we men of India realise our own dignity.

If many of the most respectable among us were not steeped in the vice this kind of indulgence would be regarded as a greater crime than the stealing of a banana by a hungry man or the picking of a pocket by a youngster who is in need of money. What is worse and more hurtful to society—to steal property or to steal the honour of a woman ?

Let me not be told that the public woman is party to the sale of her honour, but not the millionaire on the race-course whose pocket is picked by a professional pick-pocket. Who is worse—an urchin who picks a pocket or a scoundrel who drugs his victim and then makes him sign away the whole of his property ?

Does not man by his subtle and unscrupulous ways first rob woman of her noblest instinct and then make her partner in the crime committed against her ? Or are some women, like *Panchamas*, born to a life of degradation ?

I ask every young man married or unmarried to contemplate the implication of what I have written. I cannot write all I have learnt about this social disease, this moral leprosy. Let his imagination fill in the rest and then let him recoil with horror and shame from the sin if he has himself been guilty of it. And let every pure man, whoever he is, do what he can to purify his neighbourhood. I know that the second part is easier written than practised. It is a delicate matter. But for its very delicacy, it demands the attention of all

thoughtful men. Work among the unfortunate sisters must be left everywhere to experts. My suggestion has reference to work among the visitors to these houses of ill-fame.—*Y.I.* 16-4-1925.

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Not until a woman of exceptional purity and strength of character rises and devotes herself to the task of redeeming this portion of fallen humanity will the problem of prostitution be tackled. No doubt man can do much among men who degrade themselves by enticing young women to sell themselves for their lust. Prostitution is as old as the world, but I wonder if it was ever a regular feature of town life that it is today. In any case time must come when humanity will rise against the curse and make prostitution a thing of the past, as it has got rid of many evil customs, however time-honoured they might have been.—*Y.I.* 28-5-1925.

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The Root of the Evil

The tendency to see virtue in vice and excuse evil in the sacred name of art or some other false sentiment has clothed this debasing indulgence with a kind of subtle respectability which is responsible for the moral leprosy which he who runs may see.

Great as the evil is in this age of unbelief or a mere mechanical belief in God and an age of multiplicity of comforts and luxuries almost reminding one of the degradation to which Rome had descended when she was apparently at the zenith of her power, it is not easy to prescribe a remedy. It cannot be remedied by law.

London is seething with the vice. Paris is notorious for its vice which has almost become a fashion. If law would have prevented it, these highly organised nations would have cured their capitals of the vice. No amount of writing on the part of reformers like myself can deal with the evil in any appreciable form.

The political domination of England is bad enough. The cultural is infinitely worse. For whilst we resent and, therefore, endeavour to resist the political domination, we hug the cultural, not realising in our infatuation that when the cultural domination is complete, the political will defy resistance.

Let me not be misunderstood. I do not wish to imply that before the British rule prostitution was unknown in India. But I do say that it was not so rampant as now. It was confined to the few upper ten. Now it is fast undoing the youth of the middle classes.

My hope lies in the youth of the country. Such of them as are prey to the vice are not vicious by nature. They are helplessly and thoughtlessly drawn to it. They must realise the harm that it has done them and society. They must understand too that nothing but a rigourously disciplined life will save them and the country from utter ruin.

Above all unless they visualise God and seek His aid in keeping them from temptation, no amount of dry discipline will do them much good. Truly has the seer said in the Gita that 'desire persists though man may by fasting keep his body under restraint. Desire goes only when one has seen God face to face.' Seeing

God face to face is to feel that He is enthroned in our hearts even as a child feels a mother's affection without needing any demonstration. Does the child reason out the existence of a mother's love ? Can he prove it to others ? He triumphantly declares, 'It is.' So must it be with the existence of God. He defies reason. But He is experienced. Let us not reject the experience of Tulsidas, Chaitanya, Ramdas and a host of other spiritual teachers even as we do not reject that of mundane teachers.

I have already remarked that man cannot be made good by law. If I had the power of persuasion I would certainly stop women of ill-fame from acting as actresses, I would prevent people from drinking and smoking, I would certainly prevent all the degrading advertisements that disfigure even reputable journals and newspapers and I would most decidedly stop the obscene literature and portraits that soil the pages of some of our magazines. But, alas, I have not the persuasive power I would gladly possess. But to regulate these things by law... would be a remedy probably worse than the disease. What is wanted is an intelligent, sane, healthy and pure public opinion. There is no law against using kitchens as closets or drawing rooms as stables. But public opinion, that is, public taste will not tolerate such a combination. The evolution of public opinion is at times a tardy process but it is the only effective one.

Y.I. 9-7-1925.

XI. THE DEVADASI

The devadasi system is a blot upon those who countenance it. It would have died long ago but for the supineness of the public. Public conscience in this country somehow or other lies dormant. It often feels the awefulness of many a wrong, but is too indifferent or too lazy to move.

—M. K. G.

As I was talking to them [i.e., devadasis] and understanding the hidden meaning of the thing, my whole soul rose in rebellion against the custom of dedicating minor girls for immoral purposes. By calling them devadasis we insult God Himself in the name of religion, and we commit a double crime in that we use these sisters of ours to serve our lust and take in the same breath the name of God. To think that there should be a class of people given to this kind of immoral service, and that should be another class who should tolerate their hideous immorality, makes one despair of life itself. And I assure you that as I was talking to them I saw that there was no evil in their eyes, and that they were capable of fine feelings and fine character as any other women. What difference can there be between them and our own blood sisters? And if we do not allow our own sisters to be used for immoral purposes, how dare we allow these to be so used? Let Hindus who are in any way whatsoever connected with these things purge society of this pest. The majority of them have

promised to retrace their steps, if I fulfil the promise I have made to them [i.e., to give them sufficient food and clothing and education and clean surroundings]. But if they cannot, I shall blame not them but the society in which they are passing their lives. It is up to you to extend the hand of fellowship to these sisters, it is up to you to see that they are reclaimed from their life of shame. I know that when they are again face to face with temptation it will become difficult for them to resist it. But if man will restrain his lust and society stands up against the evil, it will be easily possible to rid society of the evil.—*Y.I.* 22-9-1927.

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The Way to Reform

Like untouchability this institution for the perpetuation of vice must go, if Hinduism is to be purified. Those who are engaged in the noble task of ridding society of the evil will have to work in a systematic manner and not become dispirited if they do not find their effort crowned with success at once. Let them concentrate on the evil immediately surrounding them. There are two ways of working at the problem. There should be work amongst those who employ devadasis for their base end, and the devadasi community itself. If the latter will refuse to serve society's vice, the system ends at once. But the process is not quite so simple. Hunger knows no sin. Even like Drona and Bhishma devadasis point to their bellies in justification of their sin. Habit has dulled their sense of sin regarding their calling. Therefore they have to be found an innocent

source of livelihood in the place of prostitution. Then there is work in society. Festival and marriage parties in which devadasis are employed have to be sought out and those in charge reasoned with. Reformers may not dictate reform to society. They will have to appeal to its reason and heart. In a way all reform is a kind of education, just as essential as the education which is commonly known as such. Hence it is a science by itself, and yields results only when systematically pursued.—*H*. 14-9-1934.

XII. TEAR DOWN THE PURDAH

The sooner it is recognised that many of our social evils impede our march towards Swaraj, the greater will be our progress towards our cherished goal. To postpone social reform till after the attainment of Swaraj is not to know the meaning of Swaraj.—M. K. G.

Whenever I have gone to Bengal, Bihar or the United Provinces, I have observed the purdah system more strictly followed than in the other provinces. But when I addressed a meeting at Darbhanga late at night and amid calm surroundings free from noise and bustle and unmanageable crowds, I found in front of me men, but behind me and behind the screen were women of whose presence I knew nothing till my attention was drawn to it. The function was in connection with the laying of the foundation-stone of an orphanage, but I was called upon to address the ladies behind the purdah. The sight of the screen behind which my audience, whose numbers I did not know, was seated made me sad. It pained and humiliated me deeply. I thought of the wrong being done by men to the women of India by clinging to a barbarous custom which, whatever use it might have had when it was first introduced, had now become totally useless and was doing incalculable harm to the country. All the education that we have been receiving for the past 100 years seems to have produced but little impression upon us, for I note that the purdah

is being retained even in educated households not because the educated men believe in it themselves, but because they will not manfully resist the brutal custom and sweep it away at a stroke. I have the privilege of addressing hundreds of meetings of women attended by thousands. The din and the noise created at these meetings make it impossible to speak with any effect to the women who attend them. Nothing better is to be expected so long as they are caged and confined in their houses and little court-yards. When, therefore, they find themselves congregated in a big room and are expected all of a sudden to listen to someone, they do not know what to do with themselves or with the speaker. And when silence is restored it becomes difficult to interest them in many every-day topics, for they know nothing of them, having been never allowed to breathe the fresh air of freedom. I know that this is a somewhat exaggerated picture. I am quite aware of the very high culture of these thousands of sisters whom I get the privilege of addressing. I know that they are capable of rising to the same height that men are capable of, and I know too that they do have occasions to go out. But this is not to be put down to the credit of the educated classes. The question is, why have they not gone further ? Why do not our women enjoy the same freedom that men do ? Why should they not be able to walk out and have fresh air ?

Chastity is not a hot-house growth. It cannot be superimposed. It cannot be protected by the surrounding wall of the purdah. It must grow from within, and

to be worth anything it must be capable of withstanding every unsought temptation. It must be as defiant as Sita's. It must be a very poor thing that cannot stand the gaze of men. Men, to be men, must be able to trust their womenfolk, even as the latter are compelled to trust them. Let us not live with one limb completely or partially paralysed. Rama would be nowhere without Sita, free and independent even as he was himself. But for robust independence Draupadi is perhaps a better example. Sita was gentleness incarnate. She was a delicate flower. Draupadi was a giant oak. She bent mighty Bhima himself to her imperious will. Bhima was terrible to everyone, but he was a lamb before Draupadi. She stood in no need of protection from any one of the Pandavas. By seeking today to interfere with the free growth of womanhood of India we are interfering with the growth of free and independent-spirited men. What we are doing to our women and what we are doing to the 'untouchables' recoils upon our heads with a force thousand times multiplied. It partly accounts for our own weakness, indecision, narrowness and helplessness. Let us then tear down the purdah with one mighty effort.—*Y.I* 3-2-1927.

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Purdah a Recent Institution

I am of opinion that the purdah in India is a recent institution and was adopted during the period of Hindu decline. In the age when proud Draupadi and spotless Sita lived there could be no purdah. Gargi could not have held her discourses from behind the purdah. Nor

is the purdah universal in India. It is unknown in the Deccan, Gujarat and the Punjab. It is unknown among the peasantry, and one does not hear of any untoward consequences of the comparative freedom which women in these provinces and among peasantry enjoy. Nor will it be just to say that the women or men in the other parts of the world are less moral because of the absence of the purdah system...While I hold that the ancients gave us a moral code which is not to be surpassed, I am unable to subscribe to the doctrine of their infallilibity in every detail. And who shall say what is really ancient ? Are all the hundred and eight Upanishads of equal sanctity ? It seems to me that we must test on the anvil of reason everything that is capable of being tested by it, and reject that which does not satisfy it even though it may appear in an ancient garb.

—*Y.I.* 24-3-1927.

Part V

TO THE YOUTH

I. MODERN YOUTH

Innocent youth is a priceless possession not to be squandered away for the sake of a momentary excitement, miscalled pleasure.—M. K. G.

IT is the fashion in some quarters now-a-days for the young to discredit whatever may be said by old people. I am not prepared to say that there is absolutely no justification for this belief. But I warn the youth of the country against always discounting whatever old men or women may say for the mere fact that it is said by such persons. Even as wisdom often comes from the mouths of babes, so does it often come from the mouths of old people. The golden rule is to test everything in the light of reason and experience, no matter from whom it comes. I want to revert to the subject of birth control by contraceptives. It is dinned into one's ears that gratification of the sex urge is a solemn obligation like the obligation of discharging debts lawfully incurred, and that not to do so would involve the penalty of intellectual decay. This sex urge has been isolated from the desire for progeny, and it is said by the protagonists of the use of contraceptives that conception is an accident to be prevented except when the parties desire to have children. I venture to suggest that this is a most dangerous doctrine to preach anywhere ; much more so in a country like India where the middle class male population has become imbecile through abuse of the

creative function. If satisfaction of the sex urge is a duty, the unnatural vice of which I wrote some time ago and several other ways of gratification would be commendable. The reader should know that even persons of note have been known to approve of what is commonly known as sexual perversion. He may be shocked at the statement. But if it somehow or other gains the stamp of respectability, it will be the rage among boys and girls to satisfy their urge among members of their own sex. For me the use of contraceptives is not far removed from the means to which persons have hitherto resorted for the gratification of their sexual desire with the results that very few know. I know what havoc secret vice has played among school boys and school girls. The introduction of contraceptives under the name of science and the *imprimatur* of known leaders of society has intensified the complication and made the task of reformers who work for purity of social life well-nigh impossible for the moment. I betray no confidence when I inform the reader that there are unmarried girls of impressionable age studying in schools and colleges who study birth control literature and magazines with avidity and even possess contraceptives. It is impossible to confine their use to married women. Marriage loses its sanctity when its purpose and highest use is conceived to be the satisfaction of the animal passion without contemplating the natural result of such satisfaction.

I have no doubt that those learned men and women who are carrying on propaganda with missionary zeal in favour of the use of contraceptives, are doing irreparable

harm to the youth of the country under the false belief that they will be saving thereby the poor women who may be obliged to bear children against their will. Those who need to limit their children will not be easily reached by them. Our poor women have not the knowledge or the training that the women of the West have. Surely the propaganda is not being carried on on behalf of the middle class women, for they do not need the knowledge, at any rate so much as the poor classes do.

The greatest harm, however, done by that propaganda lies in its rejection of the old ideal and substitution in its place of one which, if carried out, must spell the moral and physical extinction of the race. The horror with which ancient literature has regarded the fruitless use of the vital fluid was not a superstition born of ignorance. What shall we say of a husbandman who will sow the finest seed in his possession on stony ground or of the owner of a field who will receive, in his field rich with fine soil, good seed under conditions that will make it impossible for it to grow ? God has blessed man with seed that has the highest potency and woman with a field richer than the richest earth to be found anywhere on this globe. Surely it is criminal folly for man to allow his most precious possession to run to waste. He must guard it with a care greater than he will bestow upon the richest pearls in his possession. And so is a woman guilty of criminal folly who will receive the seed in her life-producing field with the deliberate intention of letting it run to waste. Both he and she will be judged guilty of misuse of the talents

given to them and they will be dispossessed of what they have been given. Sex urge is a fine and noble thing. There is nothing to be ashamed of in it. But it is meant only for the act of creation. Any other use of it is a sin against God and humanity. Contraceptives of a kind there were before and there will be hereafter, but the use of them was formerly regarded as sinful. It was reserved for our generation to glorify vice by calling it virtue. The greatest disservice protagonists of contraceptives are rendering to the youth of India is to fill their minds with what appears to me to be wrong idealogy. Let the young men and women of India who hold her destiny in their hands beware of this false god and guard the treasure with which God has blessed them and use it, if they wish, for the only purpose for which it is intended.

—*H*. 28-3-1936.

II. A YOUTH'S DIFFICULTY

One must not consider continence even as between husband and wife to be so difficult as to be practically impossible. On the contrary self-restraint must be considered to be the ordinary and natural practice of life.

—M. K. G.

A correspondent who prefers to remain anonymous seeks an answer to a question arising out of my article in *Harijan* addressed to the young. Although it is a sound rule to ignore anonymous correspondence, I do sometimes make an exception when the question put is substantial as in the present case.

The letter is in Hindi and is longer than it need have been. Its purport is :

> "From your writing I doubt if you understand the young mind. What has been possible for you is not possible for all young men. I happen to be married. I can restrain myself. My wife cannot. She does not want children but she does want to enjoy herself. What am I to do ? Is it not my duty to satisfy her ? I am not generous enough to look upon her satisfying her desire through other channels. I read from the papers that you are not averse to promoting marriages and blessing them. Surely you know or ought to know that they are not contracted with the high purpose that you have mentioned."

The correspondent is right. The fact that I bless so many marriages when they satisfy the tests that I

have set as to age, economy, etc., perhaps shows somewhat that I know the youth of the country to an extent that would justify my guiding them when they seek my guidance.

My correspondent's case is typical. He deserves sympathy. That the sole purpose of sexual connection is procreation is in the nature of a new discovery for me. Though I had known the rule, I had never before given it the weight it deserved. I must have till recently regarded it as a mere pious wish. I now regard it as a fundamental law of married state, which is easy of observance if its paramount importance is duly recognized. My object will be fulfilled when the law is given its due place in society. To me it is a living law. We break it always and pay heavily for its breach. If my correspondent realises its inestimable value and if he has love for his wife and has faith in himself, he will convert her to his view. Is he sincere when he says he can restrain himself ? Has the animal passion become transmuted in his case into a higher passion, say, for service of fellow beings ? Does he naturally refrain from doing anything to excite the passion in his wife ? Let him know that Hindu science denotes eight kinds of unions which include sexual suggestions made even by signs. Is the correspondent free from these ? If he is not, and if he is sincerely desirous that his wife should be weaned from the sexual desire, let him surround her with the purest love, let him explain the law to her, let him explain the physical effects of union without the desire for procreation, let him tell her what the vital fluid means. Let him

further engage his wife in healthy pursuits and strive to regulate her diet, exercise, etc., so as to still the passion in her. Above all, if he is a man of religion, he will try to transmit to his companion his own living faith. For I must confess that the observance of the law of continence is impossible without a living faith in God which is living Truth. It is the fashion now-a-days to dismiss God from life altogether and insist on the possibility of reaching the highest kind of life without the necessity of a living faith in a living God. I must confess my inability to drive the truth of the law home to those who have no faith in and no need for a Power infinitely higher than themselves. My own experience has led me to the knowledge that fullest life is impossible without an immovable belief in a living Law in obedience to which the whole universe moves. A man without that faith is like a drop thrown out of the ocean bound to perish. Every drop in the ocean shares its majesty and has the honour of giving us the ozone of life.—*H.* 25-4-1936.

III. HEADING FOR PROMISCUITY

Life is not a bundle of enjoyments, but a bundle of duties. That which separates man from beast is essentially man's recognition of the necessity of putting a series of restraints on worldly enjoyment.—M. K. G.

Thus writes a young man :

"You want everyone to become moral in order to change the world. I do not exactly know what you mean by morality—whether you confine it to matters sexual, or whether it covers the whole field of human conduct. I suspect the former, because I do not see you pointing out to your capitalist and landlord friends the great injustice and harm they are doing by making huge profits at the expense of labourers and tenants, while you are never tired of castigating young men and women for their moral lapses in sexual matters and upholding before them the virtues of celibacy. You claim to know the mind of Indian youth. I do not claim to represent anybody, but as a solitary young man I beg to challenge your claim. You do not seem to know through what environment the modern middle-class youth is passing, what with long spells of unemployment, crushing social customs and traditions, and temptations of co-education ! It is all a conflict between the old and the new ideas, resulting usually in the defeat and misery of youth. I humbly request you to be kind and compassionate to the youth and not to judge them by your puritanic standards of morality. After all, I think every act, when it is performed with mutual consent and mutual love, is moral whether it is performed within marriage or

without. Since the invention of contraceptives the sexual basis of the institution of marriage has been knocked down. It has now become an institution mainly for the protection and welfare of children. You will, perhaps, be shocked at these ideas. I would here venture to ask you not to forget your own youth when judging the present-day youth. You were an over-sexed individual given to excessive indulgence, which seems to have created in you a sort of disgust towards the sexual act, and hence your asceticism and the idea of sin. Compared to you, I think many young men of today are better in this respect."

This is from a typical letter. To my knowledge the writer has gone through several changes even during the past three months that I have known him. He is still passing through a crisis. The extract quoted is from a long letter which together with many of his other writings he would gladly have me publish. But what I have quoted just represents the attitude of many a youth.

Ofcourse my sympathies are with young men and young women. I have a vivid recollection of the days of my own youth. And it is because of my faith in the youth of the country that I am never tired of dealing with problems that face them.

For the morals, ethics and religion are convertible terms. A moral life without reference to religion is like a house built upon sand. And religion divorced from morality is like 'sounding brass' good only for making a noise and breaking heads. Morality includes truth, ahimsa and continence. Every virtue that mankind has ever practised is preferable to and derived from these

three fundamental virtues. Non-violence and continence are again derivable from Truth, which for me is God.

Without continence a man or woman is undone. To have no control over the senses is like sailing in a rudderless ship bound to break to pieces on coming in contact with the very first rock. Hence my constant insistence on continence. My correspondent is right in saying in effect that the coming in of contraceptives has changed the ideas about sexual relations. If mutual consent makes a sexual act moral whether within marriage or without, and by parity of reasoning even between members of the same sex, the whole basis of sexual morality is gone and nothing but 'misery and defeat' awaits the youth of the country. Many young men and women are to be found in India who would be glad to be free from the craving for mutual intercourse in whose grip they find themselves. This craving is stronger than the strongest intoxicant which has ever enslaved man. It is futile to hope that the use of contraceptives will be restricted to the mere regulation of progeny. There is hope for a decent life only so long as the sexual act is definitely related to the conception of precious life. This rules out of court perverted sexuality and to a lesser degree promiscuity. Divorce of the sexual act from its natural consequence must lead to hideous promiscuity and condonation, if not endorsement, of unnatural vice.

Since my own experiences are relevant to the consideration of the sex problem, let me just warn the reader who has not read my autobiographical chapters

against drawing the conclusion that my correspondent has drawn about my sins of indulgence. Whatever over-indulgence there was with me, it was strictly restricted to my wife. And I was living in a big joint family where there was hardly any privacy except for a few hours at night. I awoke to the folly of indulgence for the sake of it even when I was twenty-three years old, and decided upon total brahmacharya in 1899, i.e., when I was thirty years old. It is wrong to call me an ascetic. The ideals that regulate my life are presented for acceptance by mankind in general. I have arrived at them by gradual evolution. Every step was thought out, well considered, and taken with the greatest deliberation. Both my continence and non-violence were derived from personal experience and became necessary in response to the calls of public duty. The isolated life I had to lead in South Africa whether as a householder, legal practitioner, social reformer or politician, required, for the due fulfilment of these duties, the strictest regulation of sexual life and a rigid practice of non-violence and truth in human relations, whether with my own countrymen or with the Europeans. I claim to be no more than an average man with less than average ability. Nor can I claim any special merit for such non-violence or continence as I have been able to reach with laborious research. I have not the shadow of a doubt that any man or woman can achieve what I have, if he or she would make the same effort and cultivate the same hope and faith. Work without faith is like an attempt to reach the bottom of a bottomless pit.—*H*. 3-10-1936.

IV. STUDENTS' SHAME

Woman, I hold, is the personification of self-sacrifice, but unfortunately today she does not realise what a tremendous advantage she has over man. As Tolstoy used to say they are labouring under the hypnotic influence of man. If they would realise the strength of non-violence, they would not consent to be called the weaker sex.—M. K. G.

There is a most pathetic letter from a college girl in the Punjab lying on my file for nearly two months. Want of time was but an excuse for shirking the answer to the girl's question. Somehow or other I was avoiding the task, though I knew the answer. Meanwhile I received another letter from a sister of great experience, and I felt that I could no longer evade the duty of dealing with the college girl's very real difficulty. Her letter is written in chaste Hindustani. I must try to do as much justice as I can to the letter, which gives me a perfect picture of her deep feeling. Here is my rendering of a portion of the letter :

> "To girls and grown-up women there come times, in spite of their wish to the contrary, when they have to venture out alone, whether they are going from one place to another in the same city, or from one town to another. And when they are thus found alone, evil-minded people pester them. They use improper or even indecent language whilst they are passing by. And if fear does not check them, they do not hesitate to take further liberty. I

should like to know what part non-violence can play on such occasions. The use of violence is of course there. If the girl or the woman has sufficient courage, she will use what resources she has and teach miscreants a lesson. They can at least kick up a row that would draw the attention of the people around, resulting in the miscreants being horse-whipped. But I know that the result of such treatment would be merely to postpone the agony, not a permanent cure. Where you know the people who misbehave, I feel sure that they will listen to reason, the gesture of love and humility. But what about a fellow cycling by, using foul language on seeing a girl or a woman unaccompanied by a male companion ? You have no opportunity of reasoning with him. There is no likelihood of your meeting him again. You may not even recognise him. You do not know his address. What is a poor girl or a woman to do in such cases ? By way of example I want to give you my own experience of last night (26th October). I was going with a girl companion of mine on a very special errand at about 7-30 p.m. It was impossible to secure a male companion at the time and the errand could not be put off. On the way a Sikh young man passed by on his cycle and continued to murmur something till we were within hearing distance. We knew that it was aimed at us. We felt hurt and uneasy. There was no crowd on the road. Before we had gone a few paces the cyclist returned. We recognised him at once whilst he was still at a respectful distance. He wheeled towards us ; heaven knows whether he had intended to get down or merely pass by us. We felt that we were in danger. We had no faith in our physical prowess. I myself am weaker than the average girl. But in my hands I had a big book. Somehow or other courage came to me all of a

sudden. I hurled the heavy book at the cycle and roared out, 'Dare you repeat your pranks?' He could with difficulty keep his balance, put on speed and fled from us. Now, if I had not flung the book at his cycle, he might have harassed us by his filthy language to the end of our journey. This was an ordinary, perhaps insignificant, occurrence; but I wish you could come to Lahore and listen to the difficulties of us unfortunate girls. You would surely discover a proper solution. First of all, tell me how, in the circumstances mentioned above, can girls apply the principle of ahimsa and save themselves. Secondly, what is the remedy for curing youth of the abominable habit of insulting womenfolk? You would not suggest that we should wait and suffer till a new generation, taught from childhood to be polite to their womenfolk, comes into being. The Government is either unwilling or unable to deal with this social evil. The big leaders have no time for such questions. Some, when they hear of a girl bravely castigating ill-behaved youth, say, 'Well done. That is the way all girls should behave.' Sometimes a leader is found eloquently lecturing against such misbehaviour of students. But no one applies himself continuously to the solution of this serious problem. You will be painfully surprised to know that during Diwali and such other holidays newspapers come out with notices warning women from venturing outdoors even to see the illuminations. This one fact should enable you to know to what straits we are reduced in this part of the world! Neither the writers nor the readers of such warnings have any sense of shame that they should have to be issued."

Another Punjabi girl to whom I gave the letter to read supports the narrative from her own experiences of

her college days and tells me that what my correspondent has related is the common experience of most girls.

The other letter from an experienced woman relates the experiences of her girl friends in Lucknow. They are molested in cinema theatres by boys sitting in the row behind them using all kinds of language which I can only call indecent. They are stated to resort even to practical jokes which have been described by my correspondent but which I must not reproduce here.

If the immediate personal relief was all that was needed, no doubt the remedy that the girl who describes herself to be physically weak adopted, i.e. of flinging her book at the cyclist, was quite correct. It is an age-long remedy. And I have said in these columns that when a person wants to become violent, physical weakness does not come in the way of its effective use, even against a physically powerful opponent. And we know that in the present age there have been invented so many methods of using physical force that even a little girl with sufficient intelligence can deal death and destruction. The fashion now-a-days is growing of training girls to defend themselves in situations such as the one described by my correspondent. But she is wise enough to know that even though she was able to make effective use for the moment of the book she had in her hand as a weapon of defence, it was no remedy for the growing evil. In the cases of rude remarks, there need be no perturbation but there should be no indifference. All such cases should be published in the papers. Names of the offenders should be published when they are traced.

There should be no false modesty about exposing the evil. There is nothing like public opinion for castigating public misconduct. There is no doubt that, as the correspondent says, there is great public apathy about such matters. But it is not the public alone that are to blame. They must have before them examples of rudeness. Even as stealing cannot be dealt with unless cases of thieving are published and followed up, so also is it impossible to deal with cases of rude behaviour if they are suppressed. Crime and vice generally require darkness for prowling. They disappear when light plays upon them.

But I have a fear that the modern girl loves to be Juliet to half a dozen Romeos. She loves adventure. My correspondent seems to represent the unusual type. The modern girl dresses not to protect herself from wind, rain and sun but to attract attention. She improves upon nature by painting herself and looking extraordinary. The non-violent way is not for such girls. I have often remarked in these columns that definite rules govern the development of the non-violent spirit in us. It is a strenuous effort. It marks a revolution in the way of thinking and living. If my correspondent and the girls of her way of thinking will revolutionize their life in the prescribed manner, they will soon find that young men, who at all come in contact with them, will learn to respect them and to put on their best behaviour in their presence. But if perchance they find, as they may, that their very chastity is in danger of being violated, they must develop courage enough to

die rather than yield to the brute in man. It has been suggested that a girl who is gagged or bound so as to make her powerless even for struggling cannot die as easily as I seem to think. I venture to assert that a girl who has the will to resist can burst all the bonds that may have been used to render her powerless. The resolute will gives her the strength to die.

But this heroism is possible only for those who have trained themselves for it. Those who have not a living faith in non-violence will learn the ordinary art of self-defence and protect themselves from indecent behaviour of unchivalrous youth.

The great question, however, is why should young men be devoid of elementary good manners so as to make decent girls be in perpetual fear of molestation from them ? I should be sorry to discover that the majority of young men have lost all sense of chivalry. But they should, as a class, be jealous of their reputation and deal with every case of impropriety occurring among their mates. They must learn to hold the honour of every woman as dear as that of their own sisters and mothers. All the education they receive will be in vain if they do not learn good manners.

And is it not as much the concern of professors and schoolmasters to ensure gentlemanliness among their pupils as to prepare them for the subjects prescribed for the classroom ?—*H*. 31-12-1938.

V. THE MODERN GIRL

The modern girl has a special meaning...But all the girls who receive English education are not modern girls. I know many who are not at all touched by the 'modern girl' spirit. But there are some who have become modern girls.—M. K. G.

I have received a letter written on behalf of eleven girls whose names and addresses have been sent to me. I give it below with changes that make it more readable without in any way altering the meaning :

> "Your comments on the letter of a lady student captioned 'Students' Shame' and published in *Harijan* of the 31st December, 1938, deserve special attention. The modern girl, it seems, has provoked you to the extent that you have disposed of her finally as one playing Julliet to half a dozen Romeos. This remark which betrays your idea about women in general is not very inspiring.
>
> In these days when women are coming out of closed doors to help men and take an equal share of the burden of life, it is indeed strange that they are still blamed even when they are maltreated by men. It cannot be denied that instances can be cited where the fault is equally divided. There may be a few girls playing Juliets to half a dozen Romeos. But such cases presuppose the existence of half a dozen Romeos, moving about the streets in quest of a Juliet. And it cannot or should never be taken that modern girls are categorically all Juliets or modern youths all Romeos. You yourself have come in contact with

quite a number of modern girls and may have been struck by their resolution, sacrifice and other sterling womanly virtues.

As for forming public opinion against such misdemeanours as pointed out by your correspondent, it is not for girls to do it, not so much out of false shame as from its ineffectiveness.

But a statement like this from one revered all over the world seems to hold a brief once more for that worn out and unbecoming saying 'woman is the gate of Hell.'

From the foregoing remarks, however, please do not conclude that modern girls have no respect for you. They hold you in as much respect as every young man does. To be hated or pitied is what they resent much. They are ready to mend their ways if they are really guilty. Their guilt, if any, must be conclusively proved before they are anathematized. In this respect they would neither desire to take shelter under the covering of 'ladies, please,' nor would they silently stand and allow the judge to condemn them in his own way. Truth must be faced ; the modern girl or 'Juliet,' as you have called her, has courage enough to face it."

My correspondents do not perhaps know that I began service of India's women in South Africa more than forty years ago when perhaps none of them was born. I hold myself to be incapable of writing anything derogatory to womanhood. My regard for the fair sex is too great to permit me to think ill of them. She is, what she has been described to be in English, the better half of mankind. And my article was written to expose students' shame, not to advertise the frailties of girls. But in giving the diagnosis of the disease, I was bound,

if I was to prescribe the right remedy, to mention all the factors which induced the disease.

The modern girl has a special meaning. Therefore there was no question of my restricting the scope of my remark to some. But all the girls who receive English education are not modern girls. I know many who are not at all touched by the 'modern girl' spirit. But there are some who have become modern girls. My remark was meant to warn India's girl students against copying the modern girl and complicating a problem that has become a serious menace. For, at the time I received the letter referred to, I received also a letter from an Andhra girl student bitterly complaining of the behaviour of Andhra students which from the description given is worse than what was described by the Lahore girl. This daughter of Andhra tells me the simple dress of her girl friends gives them no protection, but they lack the courage to expose the barbarism of the boys who are a disgrace to the institution they belong to. I commend this complaint to the authorities of the Andhra University.

The eleven girls I invite to initiate a crusade against the rude behaviour of students. God helps only those who help themselves. The girls must learn the art of protecting themselves against the ruffianly behaviour of man.—*H*. 4-2-1939.

VI. A SISTER'S QUESTIONS

I have always held that it is physically impossible to violate a woman against her will.—M. K. G.

Q. "How is one to protect the honour of women?"

A. "I am afraid you do not read *Harijan* regularly. I discussed this question years ago, and have discussed it often since. The question may be discussed under two heads: (1) how is a woman to protect her own honour? and (2) how are her male relatives to protect it?

"As regards the first question, where there is a non-violent atmosphere, where there is the constant teaching of ahimsa, woman will not regard herself as dependent, weak or helpless. She is not really helpless when she is really pure. Her purity makes her conscious of her strength. I have always held that it is physically impossible to violate a woman against her will. The outrage takes place only when she gives way to fear or does not realise her moral strength. If she cannot meet the assailant's physical might, her purity will give her the strength to die before he succeeds in violating her. Take the case of Sita. Physically she was a weakling before Ravana, but her purity was more than a match even for his giant might. He tried to win her with all kinds of allurements but could not carnally touch her without her consent. On the other hand, if a woman

depends on her own physical strength or upon a weapon she is sure to be discomfited whenever her strength is exhausted.

"The second question is easily answered. The brother or father or friend will stand between his protege and her assailant. He will then either dissuade the assailant from his wicked purpose or allow himself to be killed by him in preventing him. In so laying down his life he will not only have done his duty, but given a new accession of strength to his protege who will now know how to protect her honour."

"But," said one of the sisters from Poona, "there lies the rub. How is a woman to lay down her life? Is it possible for her to do so?"

"Oh!" said Gandhiji, "any day more possible for her than for man. I know that women are capable of throwing away their lives for a much lesser purpose. Only a few days ago a young girl of twenty burnt herself to death as she felt she was being persecuted for refusing to go in for ordinary studies. And she perished with such cool courage and determination. She ignited her sari with an ordinary oil-light and did not so much as raise a cry, so that the people in the neighbouring room were unaware of the happening until all was over. I do not give these details to commend her example, but to show how easily woman can throw away her life. I at any rate am incapable of this courage. But I agree that it is not the external light but the inner light that is needed."

The same sister wondered how one was to avoid anger and violence altogether in dealing with children.

"You know our old adage," said Gandhiji laughing heartily, "play with him till he is five, hammer him for ten years, treat him as your friend when he is sixteen." "But," he added, "don't you worry. If you have to be angry with your child on occasions, I shall call that anger non-violent anger. I am speaking of wise mothers, not the ignorant ones who do not deserve to be mothers."

—*H*. 1-9-1940.

VII. SELF-DEFENCE FOR WOMEN

It is my firm conviction that a fearless woman who knows that her purity is her best shield can never be dishonoured.—M. K. G.

The whole world is on trial today. No one can escape from the war. Whilst the Ramayana and the Mahabharata are products of poets' imagination, their authors were not mere rhymsters. They were seers. What they depicted is happening before our very eyes today. Ravanas are warring with each other. They are showing matchless strength. They throw their deadly weapons from the air. No deed of bravery in the battlefield is beyond their capacity or imagination.

Man would not fight in this manner, certainly not the gods. Only brutes can. Soldiers drunk with the pride of physical strength loot shops and are not even ashamed to take liberties with women. The administration is powerless in war time to prevent such happenings. The army fulfils their primary need, and they wink the eye at their misdeeds. Where a whole nation is militarised the way of military life becomes part and parcel of its civilisation. Therefore, a soldier's taking such liberties is not a matter for condemnation. But it would take generations for India to become so.

Hence arise questions like the following which a sister sends me :

> "(1) If a soldier commits an assault on a woman, can she be said to have lost her virtue ?

(2) Is such a woman to be condemned and ostracised by society ?

(2) What should women and the public do under such circumstances ?"

Whilst the woman has in point of fact lost her virtue, the loss cannot in any way render her liable to be condemned or treated as an outcaste. She is entitled to our sympathy for she has been cruelly injured, and we should tend her wounds as we would those of any injured person.

A woman is worthy of condemnation only when she is a willing party to her dishonour. In no case are adultery and criminal assault synonymous terms. If we were to view the matter in this light, we would not hide such instances as has thus far been our wont. Public opinion against such conduct on the part of men towards women would then be created and freely exercised.

If the press carried on a substantial agitation, soldiers white or brown would probably cease to behave in this manner. Their officers would be compelled to prevent such misbehaviour.

My advice to women is that they should leave the cities and migrate to the villages where a wild field of service awaits them. There is comparatively little risk of their being assaulted in villages. They must, however, live simple lives and make themselves one with the poor. If they will display their wealth by dressing in silks and satins and wearing jewellery, they will, in running away from one danger, expose themselves to a

double. Naturally the advice cannot refer to those whom duty compels to live in cities.

The main thing, however, is for women to know how to be fearless. It is my firm conviction that a fearless woman who knows that her purity is her best shield can never be dishonoured. However beastly the man, he will bow in shame before the flame of her dazzling purity. There are examples even in modern times of women who have thus defended themselves. I can, as I write, recall two such instances. I therefore recommend women who read this article to try to cultivate this courage. They will become wholly fearless, if they can and cease to tremble as they today at the mere thought of assaults. It is not, however, necessary for a woman to go through a bitter experience for the sake of passing a test of courage. These experiences mercifully do not come in the way of lakhs or even thousands...Parents and husbands should, therefore, instruct women in the art of becoming fearless. It can best be learnt from a living faith in God. Though He is invisible, He is one's unfailing protector. He who has this faith is the most fearless of all.

But such faith or courage cannot be acquired in a day. Meantime we must try to explore other means. When a woman is assaulted she may not stop to think in terms of himsa or ahimsa. Her primary duty is self-protection. She is at liberty to employ every method or means that come to her mind in order to defend her honour. God has given her nails and teeth. She must use them with all her strength and, if need be, die in the

effort. The man or woman who has shed all fear of death will be able not only to protect himself or herself but others also through laying down his (or her) life. In truth we fear death most, and hence we ultimately submit to superior physical force. Some will bend the knee to the invader, some will resort to bribery, some will crawl on their bellies or submit to other forms of humiliation, and some women will even give their bodies rather than die. I have not written this in a carping spirit. I am only illustrating human nature. Whether we crawl on our bellies or whether a woman yields to the lust of man is symbolic of the same love of life which makes us stoop to anything. Therefore only he who loses his life shall save it: *Tena Tyaktena Bhunjeethah.* Every reader should commit this matchless shloka to memory. But mere lip loyalty to it will be of no avail. It must penetrate deep down to the innermost recesses of his heart. To enjoy life one must give up the lure of life. That should be part of our nature...—*H.* 1-3-1942.

Part VI

DIET AND HEALTH

HINTS ON DIET AND HEALTH

The diet of a man of self-restraint must be different from that of a man of pleasure, just as their ways of life must be different. Aspirants after Brahmacharya often defeat their own end by adopting courses suited to a life of pleasure.—M. K. G.

'Control of the Palate' is very closely connected with the observance of Brahmacharya. I have found from experience that the observance of celibacy becomes very easy directly one acquires mastery over taste.

Conquest of the palate does not figure among the observances of time-honoured recognition, perhaps because even great sages found it difficult to achieve.

We must take food as we take medicine, that is, without thinking whether it is palatable or otherwise, and only in a limited quantity corresponding to the needs of the body. Just as medicine taken in too small a dose does not take effect or the full effect, and as too large a dose injures the system, so it is with food as well.

It is, therefore, a breach of this principle to take anything just for its pleasant taste. It is equally a breach to take too large a quantity of any fine dish. Most of us, instead of keeping the body and the organs of sense under control, become the latter's slaves.

An experienced physician observed that he had never seen a healthy man in the world. The body is

injured every time that one over-eats, and the injury can be repaired only by fasting.

No one need take fright at this line of thinking, or give up the observance in despair. When we take a vow, that does not mean that we are able to observe it perfectly from the very beginning ; it only means constant and honest effort in thought, word and deed with a view to its fulfilment.

We must not practise self-deception by making too wide a definition of a principle, simply because it is difficult to observe. To degrade an ideal for our convenience is to practise untruth and to lower ourselves.

To understand an ideal and then to make a herculean effort to reach it, no matter how difficult it is, this is the *summum bonum* of human life. One who at all times fulfils the *Mahavratas* in their perfection has nothing else left for him to do in this world, he is *Bhagwan*, he is a *yogi*.

We humble seekers need only put forth a slow but steady endeavour which is sure to win divine grace for us in God's good time, and all relish will then disappear with the realisation of the Highest.

If we realise the importance of this principle, we must make ever increasing effort in order to observe it in perfection. We need not be thinking of food all the twenty-four hours of the day. The only thing needfull is perpetual vigilance, which will help us to find out very soon when we eat for self-indulgence and when in order only to sustain the body.

This being discovered, we must strongly set our

faces against mere indulgence. A common kitchen where this principle is observed is very helpful in this connection ; as it relieves us from the necessity of thinking out the *menu* for each day, and provides us with acceptable food which we must take in a quantity sufficient for ourselves with a contented and thankful mind disinclined to cavil at it.

We in that case are easily enabled to observe this rule. The authorities of the common kitchen lighten our burden and serve as the watch-dogs of our observance. They will not prepare any dish just because it is delicious ; they will cook only such food as helps us to keep our body a fit instrument for service.

In an ideal state of things there will be little or no use of fire at all for cooking purposes ; man will use as food only such dishes as are cooked by the Great Fire in the shape of the sun, and will become, as he was intended to be, a fruitarian. But we need not here dive to such a depth, our object has been to consider the implication and the difficulties of the observance, and its intimate relation with the observance of Brahmacharya.—*Y.I.* 21-8-1930.

* * *

Man's Natural Diet

It is my firm conviction, that man need take no milk at all, beyond the mother's milk that he takes as a baby. His diet should consist of nothing but sunbaked fruits and nuts. He can secure enough nourishment both for the tissues and the nerves from fruits like grapes and nuts like almonds. Restraint of the sexual and

other passions becomes easy for a man who lives on such food. My co-workers and I have seen by experience, that there is much truth in the Indian proverb, that as a man eats, so shall he become. (p. 45).

For the seeker who would live in fear of God, and who would see Him face to face, restraint in diet both as to quantity and quality is as essential as restraint in thought and speech. (p. 47).

Passion in man is generally co-existent with a hankering after the pleasures of the palate. (pp. 157-8).

One should eat not in order to please the palate but just to keep the body going. When each organ of sense subserves the body and through the body the soul, its special relish disappears, and then alone does it begin to function in the way nature intended it to do. Any number of experiments is too small and no sacrifice is too great for attaining this symphony with nature. But unfortunately the current is now-a-days flowing strongly in the opposite direction. We are not ashamed to sacrifice a multitude of other lives in decorating the perishable body and trying to prolong its existence for a few fleeting moments, with the result that we kill ourselves both body and soul. In trying to cure one old disease, we give rise to a hundred new ones ; in trying to enjoy the pleasures of sense we lose in the end even our capacity for enjoyment. All this is passing before our very eyes, but there are none so blind as those who will not see. (pp. 160-1).

Though I have made out an intimate connection between diet and *Brahmacharya*, it is certain that mind

is the principle thing. A mind consciously unclean cannot be cleansed by fasting. Modifications in diet have no effect on it. The concupiscence of the mind cannot be rooted out except by intense self-examination, surrender to God, and lastly grace. But there is an intimate connection between the mind and the body, and the carnal mind always lusts for delicacies and luxuries. To obviate this tendency dietetic restrictions and fasting would appear to be necessary. The carnal mind instead of controlling the senses becomes their slave, and therefore the body always needs clean non-stimulating foods and periodical fasting. Those who make light of dietetic restrictions and fasting are as much in error as those who stake their all on them. My experience teaches me that for those whose minds are working towards self-restraint dietetic restrictions and fasting are very helpful. In fact without their help concupiscence cannot be completely rooted out of the mind. (pp. 180-1).—*S.M.E.T* Vol. II.

Eating for pleasure, for the gratification of the palate, is not natural to man. But eating to live is natural. And so is the sexual act, but not gratification, for the sake of perpetuation of the species, natural to man...Complete renunciation of the (sexual) desire no doubt requires an effort, but is it not worth the prize? If a life-time may be devoted to the exploration of the properties of sound or light and heat, which after all only show us the phenomenal world to advantage, is it

too much to expect an equal effort to attain complete renunciation which leads to self-realisation or in other words, to a certain knowledge of God ?—*Y.I.* 8-7-1926.

* * *

Flesh-food

I do not regard flesh-food as necessary for us at any stage and under any clime in which it is possible for human beings ordinarily to live. I hold flesh-food to be unsuited to it. Experience teaches that animal food is unsuited to those who would curb their passions. But it is wrong to over-estimate the importance of food in the formation of character or in subjugating the flesh. Diet is a powerful factor not to be neglected. But to sum up all religion in terms of diet, as is often done in India, is as wrong as it is to disregard all restraint in regard to diet and to give full reins to one's appetite.

—*Y.I.* 7-10-1926.

* * *

A man who wants to control his animal passions easily does so if he controls his palate. I fear this is one of the most difficult vows to follow. Unless we are prepared to rid ourselves of stimulating, heating and exciting condiments we shall certainly not be able to control the over-abundant, unnecessary and exciting stimulation of the animal passions. If we do not do that we are likely to abuse the sacred trust of our bodies that has been given us, and to become less than animals and brutes, eating, drinking, and indulging in passions which we share with animals. But have you ever seen a horse or cow indulging in the abuse of the palate as we do ?—*M.G's.I.* pp. 105-6.

Appendix

Generation and Regeneration*

(By William Loftus Hare)

* Reprinted from *The Open Court* (*Chikago*) March, 1926.

I. GENERATION IN BIOLOGY

Microscopic observation of unicellular life has revealed the fact that in the lowest forms reproduction takes place by fission. Growth follows on nourishment until the maximum size for the species is reached, and then the organism divides its nucleus into two, and soon afterwards its body. Given the normal conditions,—water and nourishment,—this appears to exhaust its functions: but in the case of denial of these conditions there is sometimes observed a reconjunction of two cells, from which rejuvenation but not reproduction may result.

In multicellular life there is nourishment and growth as in the life below it, but a new phenomenon is observed. The group of cells constituting the body are mostly differentiated to separate functions: some for obtaining nourishment, some for its distributions, some for locomotion and some for protection, as, for instance, the skin. The primitive function of fission is abandoned by those to whom new duties are assigned, but is preserved by those cells which occupy a more interior position in the organism. These are guarded and served by the others which have undergone varied differentiation, while they themselves remain as they were. They divide as before, but *within* the multicellular body; and at length some are extruded from it. They have, however, gained a new power; instead of dividing in two as their ancestors did, they undergo segmentation or multiplication of nuclei

without separation. This process continues until the organism has reached the normal size and structure of its multicellular species. But in the body we may observe a new feature ; the original deposit of germ-cells are not only or chiefly extruded for external reproduction ; they themselves supply a continuous stream of fresh units from their group for interior differentiation, wheresoever they are needed. These undifferentiated germ-cells are thus performing two functions simultaneously, namely : internal reproduction for the building up of the body and external reproduction for the continuation of the species. Here we may clearly distinguish two processes, which we shall call *regeneration and generation*. One point more is important here : the regenerative process—internal reproduction—is fundamental for the individual, and therefore necessary and primary : the generative process is due to a superfluity of cells, and is therefore secondary. Probably both are closely dependent on nourishment : for if this be low, there will be a deficiency of internal reproduction and no necessity for, or possibility of, external reproduction. The law of life, then, at this level is to feed the *germ-cells*, firstly for regeneration, secondly for generation. In case of deficiency, regeneration must take the first place and generation be suspended. Thus we may learn the origin of the suspension of reproduction and follow it to its later phases of human continence and asceticism generally. Inner reproduction can never be suspended except at the cost of death, the normal origin of which is thus also discerned.

II. REGENERATION IN BIOLOGY

Before passing to the animal and human species, in which sexual differentiation has reached its highest phase and become the norm, we must glance at the intermediate form of reproduction, namely, that which preceded the bi-sexual and followed the non-sexual forms. It has received the mythological name 'hermaphrodite,' because it possessed both male and female functions. There still remain a few organisms which exhibit this condition, in which the internal multiplication of germ-cells goes on as above described, but instead of their entire extrusion for external growth they are only temporarily extruded and passed by intrusion to another part of the body, where they are nurtured until able to begin a life of their own.

The law of growth seems to be that individuals, whether unicellular, multicellular or hermaphrodite, have the potentiality of developing to the stage reached by the parent creature at the time of their extrusion. Thus it is the individual that progresses; each time it gives birth to offspring it is or may be in itself in a higher state of organisation than it was before; consequently its offspring will be able to reach the normal point of development attained by its parent. The length of the re-production period for each species and each individual will differ; but ideally it extends from maturity to approaching

decline. Premature or decadent reproduction will secure an inferior offspring according to its dominant conditions. Here, then, we perceive a law for sexual ethic derived from physical conditions: the period when generation is most favourable to the reproduction of the species and to regeneration is full maturity only.

I pass by the history of the differentiation in sex which follows the hermaphrodite, because it is a fact which may be taken for granted. It is necessary to observe, however, a new condition that has made its appearance with the bi-sexual forms. Not only have the 'two halves' of the hermaphrodite become physically separate, but each continues to produce germ-cells independently of the other. The male continues the ancient, fundamental process of internal reproduction by the multiplication of germ-cells (which for external reproduction by extrusion and intrusion are known as *spermatozoa*): the female does likewise, reserving rather than extruding the ova for impregnation by the male germ-cells. In both cases regeneration is primary and absolutely necessary for the individual. Every moment of growth from conception onwards exhibits the increasing process of regeneration. At maturity in the human species generation may take place, but not necessarily for the good of the individual, only for the race. Here, as in the lower forms, if regeneration ceases or is imperfectly performed, disease or death will supervene. Here, too, there is rivalry of interest between the individual and the future race. If there be not superfluity, the use of the germ-cells for generative reproduction

will deprive the process of regeneration (internal reproduction) of some of its material. As a matter of fact among civilised human beings sexual intercourse is practised vastly more than is necessary for the production of the next generation, and is carried on at the expense of internal reproduction, bringing disease, death and more in its train.

Another and perhaps closer glance may be taken of the human body, using that of the male as an example, though *mutatis mutandis*, the female exhibits similar processes.

The central reservoir of germ-cells is the most ancient and fundamental location of biological life. From the first the embryo, daily and hourly, grows by the multiplication of cells nourished by the mother's secretions; here again *feed the germ-cells* is the law of life. As they multiply and differentiate, they assume new forms and functions transitory or permanent as the case may be. The movement of physical birth makes little difference to the process: now through the lips instead of through the *nexus* the infant takes nourishment to feed germ-cells; these in their turn rapidly multiply and pass all over the body to places where they are needed, as they always are, to make good disused tissues. The circulatory system absorbs these cells from their primal seat and disperses them to every part of the body. In great groups they take on special duties and form and repair the different organs of the body. They undergo death a thousand times so that life may be preserved in the society of cells to which they belong, all these 'corpses'

going to the periphery, and especially to the bones, teeth, skin and hair, hardening in such a way as to give strength and protection to the body. Their death is the price of the higher life of the body and all that is dependent upon it. If they did not take nourishment, reproduce, disperse, differentiate and eventually die, the body could not live.

From the germ or sexual cells as already said come two kinds of life : (1) internal, or regenerative ; (2) external, or generative. Regeneration then, as we have called it, is the basis of the life of the body, and it draws its life from the same source as does generation. Hence it may be perceived how, in given circumstances, the two processes may be formally opposed to one another, and more than formally they may be actually at enmity.

III. REGENERATION AND THE UNCONSCIOUS

The process of regeneration is not and cannot be mechanistic in character, but like the primitive fission, is vitalistic. That is to say, it exhibits intelligence and will. To suppose that life separates, differentiates and segregates by a process that is purely mechanistic is inconceivable. True, these fundamental processes are so far removed from our present consciousness as to seem to be uncontrolled by the human or animal will. But a moment's reflection will show that just as the will of the fully developed human being directs his external movements and actions in accordance with the guidance of the intellect,—this, indeed, being its function,—so the earlier processes of the gradual organization of the body must, within the limits provided by environment, be allowed to be directed by a kind of will guided by a kind of intelligence. This is now known to psychologists as 'the unconscious.' It is a part of our self, disconnected from our normal daily thinking, but intensely awake and alert in regard to its own functions—so much so that it never for a moment subsides into sleep as the consciousness does.

The unconscious, then, is the vital force which superintends the complex processes of regeneration. Its first task is the segmentation of the impregnated ovum and thereafter, until death, it continues to preserve its appropriate organism by absorbing and despatching the

fundamental germ-cells to their respective stations. Though I here may seem to contradict many notable psychologists, I would say that the Unconscious is only concerned with the individual and not with the species: therefore, first with regeneration. Only in one sense can the Unconscious be said to concern itself with the future generation; to whatsoever state of organization its energy has brought the individual, that the Unconscious seeks to conserve. But it cannot do the impossible; it cannot, even with the help of the conscious will, prolong life indefinitely. Therefore it reproduces itself by the impulse of sexual intercourse, in which it may be said the Unconscious and the conscious wills unite. The gratification, normally, of sexual intercourse may be taken as a sign of there being some purpose to be served beyond that of the individual, who eventually pays a price more heavy than he knows. This truth is expressed intuitively in the words of the Hebrew writer who puts a solemn warning into the divine lips: "I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children."—(*Gen. iii*, 16).

IV. GENERATION AND DEATH

It is undesirable to load this article with extracts from the writings of scientific specialists, but as the matter here dealt with is so important, and popular ignorance so widespread, I am compelled to make some authoritative quotations. Ray Lankester says: "It results from the constitution of the protozoon body as a single cell, and its method of multiplication by fission, that death has no place as a natural recurrent phenomenon among these organisms."

Weismann writes: "Natural death occurs only among multicellular organisms, the single-celled forms escape it. There is no end to their development which can be likened to death, nor is the rise of new individuals associated with the death of the old. In the division the two portions are equal: neither is the older nor the younger. Thus there arises an unending series of individuals, each as old as the species itself, each with the power of living on indefinitely, ever dividing, but never dying."

Patrick Geddes writes (in *The Evolution of Sex*, from which the above extracts are taken): "Death, we may thus say, is the price paid for a body, the penalty its attainment and possession sooner or later incurs. Now by a body is meant a complex colony of cells in which there is more or less division of labour." (p. 20).

Again, to quote Weismann's striking words: "The

body or *Soma* thus appears to a certain extent as a subsidiary appendage of the true bearers of life—the reproductive cells."

And Ray Lankester has the same idea: "Among multicellular animals certain cells are separated from the rest of the constituent units of the body...The bodies of the higher animals, which die, may from this point of view be regarded as something temporary and non-essential, destined merely to carry for a time, to nurse and to nourish the more important and deathless fission-products."

But the most striking, and probably most surprising fact among the data before us is the close connection, in higher organisms, between reproduction and death, a subject upon which many scientists write with clarity and certainty. *The nemesis of reproduction is death.* This is patent in many species, where the organism, sometimes the male and sometimes the female, not infrequently dies in continuing the life of the species. Survival of the individual after reproduction is a triumph of life that is not always attained—in some cases never. In his essay on death Goette has well shown how closely and necessarily bound together are the facts of reproduction and death, which may both be described as katabolic crises. Patrick Geddes writes on this subject (p. 255 *op. cit.*): "The association of death and reproduction is indeed patent enough, but the connection is in popular language usually misstated. Organisms, one hears, have to die; they must therefore reproduce, else the species would come to an end. But such emphasis on posterior

utilities is almost always only an afterthought of our invention. The true statement, as far as history furnishes an answer, is not that they reproduce because they have to die, but that they die because they have to reproduce."

And Goette says briefly : "It is not death that makes reproduction necessary, but reproduction has death as its inevitable consequence."

After giving a large number of instances Geddes concludes with these remarkable words : "In the higher animals the fatality of the reproductive sacrifice has been greatly lessened, yet death may tragically persist, even in human life, as the direct nemesis of love. The temporarily exhausting effect of even moderate sexual indulgence is well known, as well as the increased liability to all forms of disease while the physical energies are thus lowered."

This discussion may be summed up briefly and, I hope, conclusively by saying that in human life the sexual act is essentially katabolic (or a movement towards death) in the male and in parturition of the offspring it is katabolic for the female.

A whole chapter could be written on the effect of undue indulgence on the health of the body. Virility, old age, vitality and immunity from disease are the normal lot of nearly or quite continent persons. A proof of this, if a rather unpleasant one, is derived from the fact that a very large number of diseases in men have been and are cured by the artificial injection of *semen* into debilitated persons.

There may well be a resistance in the mind of the

reader to accepting the conclusions offered in the present section of this essay. People will hastily point to the many old and apparently healthy persons who have been parents of large families ; they will quote statistics which show that the married live longer than the celibates, and so forth. Neither of these arguments have force in face of the fact that death, scientifically conceived, is not an event which occurs at the end of life but a process which begins—as shown by the authorities I have quoted—with life itself, and continuous, moment by moment, to run alongside with life. Anabolic repair and katabolic waste are the parallel forces of life and death. The first leads in the race during youth and early manhood ; in middle life they run neck and neck, but in decline the death process gains the lead, and with the last breath, conquers. Everything which leads to this conquest, which hastens it by a day, a year or a decade, is part of the death process. And such, indeed, is sexual intercourse, especially when practised to excess.

It is sufficient to say here to those who doubt the authority of my words above that they may do well to consult a most interesting and informative work entitled *The Problem of Age, Growth and Death,* by Charles S. Minot [1908, John Murray], in which the author expounds the physiology of decay and death. Not being a medical book, but a group of popular lectures, specific diseases and sexuality are but lightly discussed. The one fact upon which I rely is that natural death is a *process,* not an isolated event. But the book that I value above all others on the subject of sexuality is *Regeneration, the*

Gate of Heaven by Dr. Kenneth Sylvan Guthrie [Boston ; the Barta Press], whose title indicates a predominantly spiritual aim, although the physical and ethical aspects are fully discussed, and supported by hosts of scientific and patristic authorities. Strangely enough, however, the author does not emphasize the relation of sex to death, which is the subject of this section of my essay.

V. THE ORGAN OF THE MIND

The extent of the static opposition between generation and regeneration may be realized when we consider the higher functions of the body, and particularly the physical organ of the mind. The nervous system—cerebro-spinal and sympathetic—are, like all other organs, built up of cells that have once been germ-cells, drawn from the deepest seat of life : in continuous streams they are distributed and differentiated to the ganglia of the systems, and of course, in immense quantities to the brain. Withdrawal of germ-cells from their upward, regenerative course for generative or merely indulgent purposes, deprives the organs of their full replenishing stock of life, to their cost, slowly and ultimately. It is these physical facts which constitute the basis of a personal sexual ethic, counselling moderation if not restraint,—at any rate explaining the origin of restraint, as said above.

I do not hesitate to add to this section one illustration out of several which might be adduced, to show how closely in some philosophical systems continence is believed to minister to mental and spiritual vigour. I allude to the Indian system of Yoga. The reader may refer to any of the standard translations of *Patanjali's Yoga Sutras* (that by James H. Woods in the Harvard Oriental Series is the best known to me) in order to test the brief statement I now make.

It is probably known to those who are familiar with Indian religious and social life that asceticism was and is still practised by the Hindus. Originally called *tapas*, it had two aims, one to maintain and increase the powers of the body and the other to transcend the normal powers of the mind. Traditionally one is known as *hathayoga* and is carried to extraordinary degrees of attainment, making bodily perfection an end in itself. The other, known as *rajayoga*, is directed rather towards intellectual and mystical development. Yet the two systems have in common an essential physical ethic, to which I now call attention. This is set forth in the classical *sutras* of Patanjali and in many later works derived from this master psychologist of ancient India.

Among the 'hindrances' to the desired attainment, 'passion' is said to be the third (II. 7). Passion is that greed or thirst or desire for either pleasure or the means of attaining it, says the philosopher. Pleasure is to be rejected by the *yogin* because it is intermingled with pain (II. 15). That disposes of the psychological attraction of sexuality, and in later *sutras* we are led to physical considerations.

There are eight aids to *yoga's* end; the first and second are called "Abstention and Observances" and constitute the preliminary ethic which the *yogin* must observe. It is astonishing that the many babblers on the *yoga* systems either do not know or refrain from saying that the fourth abstention is "Abstinence from incontinence" (II. 30), and that "Continence is the control of the hidden organ of generation."

But the consequences of the abstention from incontinence are remarkably rich according to this philosopher, who says (II. 38) : "As soon as he is grounded in abstinence he acquires energy—that is power. By the acquisition of which he accumulates qualities such as minuteness...and when perfected he is endowed with the eight perfections, of which the first is called 'Reasoning.' He is able to transfer his thinking to his hearers."

Happy man ! Rare attainment ! A modern Indian scholar, M. N. Dvivedi, has a very significant comment on this *sutra*, with which I will conclude. He says : "It is a well-known physiological law that the *semen* has great connection with the intellect, and we might add the spirituality of man. The abstaining from waste of this important element of being gives power, the real occult power such as is desired. No *yoga* is ever reported successful without the observance of this rule as an essential preliminary."

It only remains to be said that in the many commentaries on *yoga* the purpose and process are veiled in quasi-scientific mythology. The 'power' is said to creep silently like a serpent from the lowest *chakram* to the highest : that is, from the tests to the brain.

VI. PERSONAL SEXUAL ETHIC

Ethic in general is derived from facts given in the experience of life whether of individuals or societies or the race. Historically, it has often been formulated by some outstanding personality, and sometimes invested with a divine or semi-divine authority. Moses, the Buddha, Confucius, Socrates, Aristotle, Christ, and great moralists and philosophers who in all countries followed them, all proposed, each in their separate day and country, some criterion by which human conduct might be tried. A general ethical system is dependent, then, upon metaphysics, psychology, physiology and sociology, which together supply the facts or supposed facts, which speak for themselves. A personal sexual ethic, therefore, for any age or civilization will be drawn from the data which most impress men in their own experience. This personal sexual ethic, like the social sexual ethic, varies from age to age, but it has some elements of stability in it, which are more or less permanent.

In attempting to formulate a personal sexual ethic for these times, one would draw from all known facts and probabilities, especially when these are confirmed by the experience of reliable observers. I am not assuming too much when I say that the facts adduced in my sections I to V suggest immediately to the mind of a candid and intelligent reader a number of logical and inevitable conclusions. From the point of view of bodily, mental

and spiritual welfare, sexual continence would appear to be the irrefutable law deduced from the facts. But immediately another law springs up to challenge it—"the law in our members" as the Christian apostle calls it. We are in the presence of an antinomy—law contradicting law. The older law is that of Nature, whence we have sexual impulse ; the newer law is that of intuition, of science, of experience, of conviction, of ideal. Obedience to the older law tends to decay and premature death (speaking relatively) : the path of the newer law is beset with difficulties so great that one hardly listens seriously to its voice. People cannot get themselves to believe this statement of the case. They begin at once to say : But, but, but? It is worthy of remark here that the formulation of the strictest ethic by *yogin, bhikkhu* and monk does not, as is so often believed, rest on mythologic fables or superstitions, but on an intuition of the physiological facts described in this essay.

I know of no modern writer who has stated the case for the sexual ethic for the Christian more forcibly or clearly than Leo Tolstoy, the now discredited idealist of what once was Russia. I print it here as an illustration of the old* philosopher's views :

102. The instinct of the continuation of the race—the sexual instinct—is innate in man. In the animal condition he fulfils his destiny by satisfying this instinct, and in so fulfilling it finds welfare.

* The reader should remember that Tolstoy's definition of sin has no theological connotation ; sin is defined by him as that which constitutes an obstacle to the manifestation of *love*, which in its turn is defined as universal goodwill.

103. But with the awakening of consciousness, it appears to man that the gratification of this instinct may increase the welfare of his separate being, and he enters into sexual intercourse, not with the object of continuing the race, but to increase his personal welfare. This constitutes the sexual sin...

107. In the first case, when man desires to keep chaste † and to consecrate all his powers to the service of God, sexual sin will consist in any sexual intercourse whatever, even though it have for its object the birth and rearing of children. The purest marriage state will be such an innate sin for the man who has chosen the alternative of chastity.

113. The sexual sin, i.e., mistake, for the man who has chosen the service of chastity, consist in this: he might have chosen the highest vocation and used all his powers in service of God, and consequently, for the spread of love and towards the attainment of the highest welfare, instead of which he descends to a lower plane of life and deprives himself of his welfare.

114. The sexual sin or mistake for the man who has chosen to continue the race will consist in the fact that by depriving himself of having children, or, at all events, of family relationships, he deprives himself of the highest welfare of sexual life.

115. In addition to this—as with the gratification of all needs—those who try to increase the pleasure of sexual intercourse diminish the natural pleasure in proportion as they addict themselves to lust.

† The words chaste and chastity are used by the author in their Russian signification which includes complete abstinence from sexual intercourse.

It will be observed that Tolstoy's doctrine is in ethical relativity ; the effective absolute is not fixed for man by God or some authoritative teacher, but is chosen by the individual himself. All that is necessary is that he should conform to the law he has accepted.

Such an ethic offers a series of descending prohibitions. To the man who has a conviction in favour of entire continence, and who intelligently controls himself for higher physical and psychic ends, any form of sexual indulgence is disallowed ; to the man who has entered into the bond of marriage, sexuality outside it is forbidden. Further, promiscuous or irregular intercourse of the unmarried would nevertheless exclude such a degrading relation as prostitution, while any person engaging in natural act should shun unnatural vices. Finally, to any class of person indulging at all, over-indulgence would be regarded as an evil, while for the immature and the youthful, indulgence should be postponed. Such is the system of sexual ethic.

I can hardly think that any one can be found incapable of understanding the nature of this general sexual ethic, and there must be very few who would on serious reflection deny its force. There is a tendency, however, to meet such an ethic by sophistry of various kinds. People suppose that because continence is difficult and undoubtedly rare its advocacy is invalid. Logically they should say the same of fidelity in marriage—which is in some cases difficult—or restricted indulgence within it, or adherence to the natural practice. If they deny one ideal they may deny all and permit us to fall into the

lowest vices and inordinate lust. Why not ? The only reasonable and logical method is to follow the star above us, the star of the ideal that leads us out of one declension after another and enables us to conquer by the power of one law the power of its antimony. Thus by the intelligent and volitional practice of this ethic a man may conceivably be raised from the unnatural vices of youth to natural indulgence even if promiscuous ; from this he may be drawn to the discipline of married fidelity, and for the sake of himself and his partner, to such restraint as they are able to endure. The same ethic may lead him on to the higher victories of continence, or indeed catch him before he has sunk to the several lower phases of indulgence.

VII. EROS AND AGAPE

The New Testament has much teaching in reference to 'love,' and adopts two conceptions, which must be separately examined. The first is that of *eros*, the passive love of life, of the world, of man and woman, of the manifold sensations and emotions that yield us pleasure. This *eros* is not a matter of our wilful choice ; we are attracted here and repelled there ; we gravitate to life itself, by forces that seem to be greater than ourselves, and to which we, for the most part, respond by appropriate action. Our likes and dislikes, our loves and hates, our affection and disaffection form one system in *eros*. For what does *eros* ask ? For welfare : for the welfare of that separate personality in which the claims are felt most keenly—namely, for 'myself.' And that welfare is pursued with egoistic motive through every life, every generation, every nation, growing in intensity and remorselessness, until it reaches, as lately, a state of world-war. It passes through innumerable phases, adopts, by the aid of the intellect, all kinds of mechanical and economic devices, and is at the present moment incarnate in the system of modern civilization.

What, then, we may legitimately ask, was the Christian teaching about this *eros*, this love of life ? Was it to be despised, neglected, resisted, or stamped out ? Or, was it to be given free rein to attain its ends ? All the teaching as to *eros* may be summed up in the

simple words: "Your Heavenly Father knoweth what thing ye have need of," and "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." *Eros* is not to be destroyed, but transcended; a higher aim is proposed by Christ which, if attempted with success, will lead to a 'more abundant life' in which a purified *eros* has its share.

It is here we meet with the essential Christian Love called in the New Testament *agape*. We are able to understand at once its distinctive quality as compared with *eros*. *Agape*, unlike *eros*, is an act of personal will. It is 'loving-kindness' that overrides attraction and repulsion, and so can be extended to friend and enemy alike. Christian love emphatically is not, therefore, the weak and sentimental emotion it is so often supposed to be, but is, in its very nature, an effort of the will that rises above all emotion. It is not merely will, but *will qualified by goodness*, and the Christian, in exercising such love, accomplishes and facilitates for others the aims of their *eros*; like the Heavenly Father, he also "knows what things men have need of." By means of the faculties of imagination and compassion he is prompted to meet their needs, for as he would that men should do for him so he strives to do for them: for he knows that *eros* in them, as in him, asks for life. The Christian's conception of life, therefore, does not deny the claims of *eros*, but emphasizes the duty of *agape*. Christian ethic is thus a new life direction, a turning round from the way of the world, from the seeking of private welfare to positive goodwill and universal welfare.

The early Christians were taught, like other people, a 'golden rule,' but even though this were intelligible enough they were taught also something still more lofty and metaphysical: men are to imitate God: as he is perfect in loving-kindness, so also must His servants be: "because God is love"; *hoti ho theos agape estin* (Matt. v., 48; John Ep. I., IV, 8).

VIII. SOCIAL SEXUAL ETHIC

Just as society is the extension and co-ordination of the activities of individuals, so a social sexual ethic rises out of a personal one. In other words, society requires additions to and qualifications of the personal ethic, and the chief instance of these is the institution of marriage. A great deal has been written upon the history of marriage by learned scientists, and the data collected are immense. Nothing but the bare conclusion need be cited here in order to enable us to refer to modern expedients that are being offered.

Anciently, and arising out of the facts of the human reproduction, the mother was naturally the more important of the two partners. She was, as she still is, the chief agent of nature's process. Within her and around her are the centres of family growth. Consequently matriarchy, or the rule of the mother, was once widely recognized, and polyandry, the practice of associating several males with the central female, was admitted. There are vestiges of this system still in vogue among the primitive tribes of Asia. Out of it, and partly as a consequence of tribal association, the status of the husband was evolved. One of the several men associated with the mother—the strongest and most attractive defender—was raised to a position of preference. Indeed the word 'husband' contains the history of the institution down to early Scandinavian

times. He was *husbuondi*, the housedweller, bound, as others were not, to the house. Eventually, the husband became the master of the house, and one of this class the chief or king of the tribe ; and just as under the matriarchy the practice of polyandry appeared, so under male rule the practice of polygamy developed.

Psychologically, therefore, if not socially, man is naturally polygamous and woman naturally polyandrynous. As a male, the man radiates his desire in many directions always lighting for the time being on the most attractive of the opposite sex. And similarly with the female. But human society, both primitive and modern, could not exist unless some check were placed upon the promiscuous, natural, psychological impulses, which are, in all species and kingdoms below the human, exuberant and prolific. The check invented by Society inevitably was marriage, and eventually monogamous marriage. Its only alternative is promiscuity and the utter disruption, at least, of the present form of Society. We can, of course, see the contest going on before our eyes. Prostitution, irregular and non-legal unions, adulteries and divorces are the day-to-day evidence that monogamous marriage has not established itself in power over the older and more primitive relationships. Will it ever do so ?

Meanwhile, notice must be given to an expedient that has long been secretly present with us, but has lately shown its face without shame. It is called 'Birth Control,' and consists in the use of chemical and mechanical means for preventing conception. Concep-

tion, ofcourse, apart from its burden upon the woman, places a restraint for a considerable time upon the man, especially upon the man of good feeling. Birth control or contraception removes all prudential motives for self-restraint and makes it possible for sexual indulgence in marriage to be limited only by the diminution of desire or the advance of age. Apart from this, however, it inevitably has an influence outside the marriage relation. It opens the door for irregular, promiscuous and unfruitful unions, which from the point of view of modern industry, sociology and politicis, are full of dangers. I cannot go into these here. It is sufficient to say that by contraception, inordinate sexual indulgence both in and out of marriage is facilitated, and, if I am right in my foregoing physiological arguments, evil must come to both individuals and the race.

IX. CONCLUSION

Like the seed cast by the sower, this essay will fall into the hands of some who will despise it, of those who from incapacity or sheer idleness will not even understand it. In some of those who for the first time hear of its ideas it will rouse opposition and even anger ; but to a few it will appeal as truthful and useful. Yet even they will find doubts and questions rising in their minds. The simplest of them will say to me : "According to your arguments sexual intercourse ought not to take place ; the world would then become unpeopled—which is absurd ! Therefore you must be wrong." My reply is that I have no such dangerous nostrum to offer. 'Birth Control' is the most potent form of birth prevention and will depopulate the world faster than the attempted practice of continence. My purpose is a simple one : by offering certain philosophic and scientific truths as a challenge to ignorance and indulgence, I desire to help to purify the sexual life of our time.

GLOSSARY OF INDIAN WORDS

Ahimsa .. .. Non-violence.

Arundhati .. .. wife of Vasistha, a Vedic sage.

Asana .. .. a seat ; a Yoga posture.

Ashram, Ashrama .. abode of a spiritual teacher ; a period in the life of a Brahman, there being four such periods, viz., Brahmacharya, Grihastha, Vanaprastha and Sannyasa.

Atma .. .. soul.

Bhagavadgita .. (*see* Gita).

Bhagawan .. .. a divine being.

Bhagini Samaj .. an association of women.

Bhajana Mandali .. a group of worshippers.

Bharatmata .. Mother India.

Bhasma .. .. metallic or vegetable ashes used for medicinal purposes.

Bhikkhu .. .. a mendicant.

Bhima .. .. second Pandava prince who was noted for his super-human strength.

Bhishma .. .. Grand Old Man of the Mahabharata famed for his righteousness.

Brahma .. .. God.

Brahmachari .. a male who has taken a vow to lead a celibate life.

Brahmacharini .. a female who observes celibacy.

Brahmacharya .. continence ; religious studentship.

Brahman .. .. a member of the priestly caste among Hindus.

Buddha ..	.. founder of Buddhism ; also known as Gautama, Siddharta, etc.
Chaitanya ..	.. Hindu religious teacher of the 15th century A.D.
Chakram ..	.. a wheel ; plexus.
Charka ..	.. spinning wheel.
Damayanti ..	.. wife of Nala, a hero of the Pauranic age.
Devadasi ..	.. a female devoted to the service of a temple.
Dharma ..	.. religion ; law ; prescribed course of conduct.
Dharmaja ..	.. legitimate.
Draupadi ..	.. wife of the Pandavas, the heroes of the Mahabharata.
Drona ..	.. a hero of the Mahabharata.
Gayatri ..	.. the most sacred Vedic prayer.
Gita ..	.. a most popular Hindu scriptural work in which Sri Krishna sums up the essence of Hindu religion.
Grihasthashram	.. period of life led by a Hindu as a householder.
Guru ..	.. spiritual teacher.
Hakim ..	.. a physician practising the Unani system of medicine.
Harijan ..	.. literally 'people of Hari or God' members of the 'untouchable' class among Hindus.
Hathayoga ..	.. a rigorous system of Yoga (*see* Yoga).
Japa ..	.. muttered prayer.
Jyoti Sangha	.. a group of social workers.

Kama .. .. lust ; Eros.

Khaddar, Khadi .. handspun and handwoven cloth.

Kamaja .. .. lust-born.

Koran .. .. most sacred scriptural work of Muslims.

Madhuparka .. offering made by Hindus to a guest or a bridegroom on his arrival at the door of his host or father of the bride respectively.

Mahabharata .. Hindu epic narrating the story of the Great War between the Pandavas and Kauravas.

Mahatma .. .. Great Soul.

Mahavratas .. .. the great vows.

Mantra .. .. Vedic hymn ; a sacred formula or incantation.

Manu .. .. ancient Hindu law-giver.

Mirabai .. .. a Rajput poet-princess who was a great devotee of God Krishna.

Moksha .. .. liberation from earthly bondage.

Muhammad .. founder of Islam.

Niyoga .. .. ancient Hindu custom of younger brothers begetting on elder brother's widow.

Panchamas .. untouchables.

Pandavas .. .. heroes of the Mahabharata.

Patanjali .. .. expounder of the Hindu system of philosophy known as Yoga.

Pativrata .. .. chaste wife.

Pranayama .. breathing exercise according to Yogic system.

Prashnopanishad .. one of the major Upanishads.

Purdah .. .. veil screening the face of women from sight of strangers.

Rajayoga .. .. an easy mode of Yoga (*see* Yoga).

Rajayogi .. .. one who follows the Rajayoga.

Rama .. .. hero of the Hindu epic, the Ramayana.

Ramanama .. continuous repetition of the divine name "Rama."

Ramdas .. .. Maharashtra saint who lived in the 17th century.

Ramraj .. .. literally "kingdom of Rama," ideal system of government.

Rishi .. .. an inspired sage.

Sagotra .. .. of the same kin.

Sahadharmini .. a legally married wife.

Sangha .. .. association, group.

Sannyasa .. .. abandonment of all worldly ties with a view to fixing the mind on the Supreme Being.

Sannyasi .. .. one who has taken to Sannyasa.

Sapinda .. .. having the same funeral cake; blood relation.

Saptapadi .. .. ceremony of the bridegroom and bride walking together round the nuptial fire.

Sati .. .. a virtuous wife who immolates herself on the death of her husband.

Satya .. .. Truth.

Satyagraha .. .. recourse to Truth-force or soul-force.

Satyagrahi .. .. one who has recourse to Satyagraha.

Savitri .. .. wife of Satyavan, a Pauranic hero.

Seva .. .. selfless service of others.

Shastra .. .. scriptural text.

Shloka .. .. stanza.

Sita .. .. wife of Rama (*see* Rama).

Smriti .. .. code of ancient Hindu law.

Sutra .. .. an aphorism ; a concise rule.

Swadeshi .. .. made in one's own country.

Swamin .. .. master of the house.

Swamini .. .. mistress of the house.

Swaraj .. .. self-government ; independence.

Tapas .. .. austerity ; penance.

Tulsidas .. .. poet-saint of Northern India who lived in the 16th century A.D. and who wrote the Hindi work "Ramacharitamánasa," otherwise known as "Tulsi Ramayana" extolling the glories of Rama.

Upanishads .. Hindu philosophical treatises composed subsequent to the Vedas.

Vaidya .. .. a physician practising the Ayurvedic system of medicine.

Vanaprasthashram.. period of life led by a Hindu as a hermit.

Varna .. .. caste ; colour.

Vishwamitra .. a celebrated sage.

Vyabhichara .. adultery.

Vyasa .. .. a celebrated sage who was the author of the Epic, Mahabharata.

Yakuti	..	.. Unani tonic.
Yoga	..	.. Hindu system of religious contemplation for effecting union of the human soul with the Supreme Being.
Yogi	..	.. one who practises Yoga.

ABBREVIATIONS

H.—*Harijan.*

M.G's.I.—*Mahatma Gandhi's Ideas*, by C. F. Andrews. George Allen & Co., London.

S. and W.—*Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi.* G. A. Natesan & Co., Madras, Fourth Edition.

S.M.E.T.—*The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, by M. K. Gandhi, 2 Vols., Navajeevan Press, Ahmedabad.

Y.I.—*Young India.*

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